Pudgalavāda Buddhism

The Reality of the Indeterminate Self

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12. Monograph no. 1. Leonard C.D.C. Priestley
Pudgalavāda Buddhism: The Reality of the Indeterminate Self 1999

South Asian Studies Papers, no. 12, Monograph no. 1

Pudgalavāda Buddhism
The Reality of the Indeterminate Self

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1999

Published by
the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Toronto
Room 2057, 100 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3G3, Canada

ISBN 1-895214-21-1 (hard cover)
1-895214-18-1 (soft cover)

Printed in Canada by Coach House Printing

In memory of
F.E.L. Priestley
1905–1988

Preface

THIS book had its beginning in a talk which I gave many years ago to the University of Toronto Buddhist Students Association. I was intrigued by the Pudgalavāda's apparent denial of the doctrine of non-self. The matter proved to be more complex than I had supposed, and the discovery that the Pudgalavāda once had a very substantial following in India made me realize that this was not a small sect on the fringes of Buddhism, but rather an integral part of the Indian Buddhist tradition. Further research brought to light further complexities, so that what began as a very limited inquiry grew into the work of years.

Like all who are engaged in the study of the Pudgalavāda, I am greatly indebted to the Indian, Chinese and Tibetan translators, some of them anonymous, through whose efforts the only surviving works of the Pudgalavāda have come down to us, and to the modern scholars who by editing, translating and studying the various texts relevant to the Pudgalavāda have laid a foundation upon which the rest of us can build. I should like in particular to express my gratitude to T. Stcherbatsky, K. Venkataramanan and Thich Thiện Châu; it was from Stcherbatsky's translation of the critique of the Vātsīputrīyas in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and Venkataramanan's of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* that I first became aware of the Pudgalavāda and its significance, and it was Thích Thiện Châu who identified the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* in its two Chinese versions as belonging to the Pudgalavāda, and who wrote the first comprehensive study of the doctrines of the Pudgalavādin schools.

I should also like to acknowledge the guidance and encouragement in years past of my teachers and colleagues, and the more recent support and encouragement of a number of colleagues and friends. Among many others, I wish to thank especially A.K. Warder, who long ago supervised my doctoral thesis on Nāgārjuna, for a number of helpful comments and suggestions, as well as for his perennially useful *Indian Buddhism*; Peter Skilling, for sending me offprints of his articles, for his continuing interest and encouragement, and for having drawn my attention to the importance of the *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya*; and N.K. Wagle, Director of the Centre for South Asian Studies at the University of Toronto, for suggesting that I develop my work on the Pudgalavāda into a monograph to be published in the Centre's Series, and for his general assistance.

I also wish to acknowledge a vast debt to my oldest friend, the late James Ford of Laurentian University, for his constant good will and encouragement, and for many illuminating discussions about philosophy; to my wife, Rosalind, for her technical assistance, and for her patience, good humour and inexhaustible support; and to my father, F.E.L. Priestley, from whom, in classes and conversations, I learned most of what I know about literature and the history of ideas, and to whose memory this book is dedicated.

L.C.D.C. Priestley
Richmond Hill, 1999

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Introduction

THE Pudgalavāda was a branch of Buddhism which flourished in India from the third century BCE until the eleventh century CE. It was distinguished from other forms of Buddhism by its doctrine of the reality of the person (*pudgala*) or self. The Buddha was generally understood to have taught that strictly speaking there is no such thing as a self; there are only the various phenomena (*dharma*), material and mental, which in association with one another constitute the individual. But the Pudgalavādins held that the person has more than a merely nominal existence, or at any rate that it cannot be reduced to the phenomena upon which it evidently depends. They affirmed the existence of the person as something not separate from its supporting *dharmas* and yet also not identifiable with them, whether individually or collectively. They thus appeared to have abandoned the Buddha's teaching of non-self, and some of their fellow Buddhists seem to have doubted whether the Pudgalavādins could properly be considered Buddhist at all.

Such a development in Buddhism is surely of considerable intrinsic interest. That people who regarded themselves as Buddhists rejected (as it seems) the doctrine of the unreality of the self certainly confirms our impression that this must have been a difficult doctrine to accept, no less in ancient India than now in the West. What these people believed, and how they tried to reconcile their belief with what had come down to them as the teaching of the Buddha, is surely worth investigating.

Moreover, the study of the Pudgalavāda offers a new perspective in our approach to the Buddha's teachings. Every school of Buddhism represents a tradition of interpretation. If we study the early sutras in the light of the commentarial and doctrinal elaborations of a single school, we restrict ourselves to the perspective of that school. If what we are interested in is that school's interpretation of the sutras rather than the sutras themselves, there is of course no great disadvantage in this, although even then the context of other traditions of interpretation may help to illuminate the one we are studying. But if what we want to investigate is the sutras themselves, if we want to try to determine what the Buddha actually intended, at least according to his portrayal in the early sutras, we need to be aware of the full range of interpretation within the Buddhist tradition, just as in studying a single text it will be to our advantage to consider

as many as possible of the available commentaries. The Pudgalavāda offers an interpretation of the early sutras which is quite distinct from the one familiar to us from the literature of the Theravāda, and likewise from the hardly less familiar interpretations of the Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika schools. For this reason too it seems eminently worthy of investigation.

But in fact relatively little work has been done as yet on the history and doctrines of the several schools of the Pudgalavāda. The most important reason for this is no doubt the paucity and difficulty of our sources. Almost all of the literature of the Pudgalavāda has been lost. What has survived is for the most part available only in Chinese translations of daunting opacity. Some extensive passages from Pudgalavādin texts are quoted in the Tibetan translation of a Mahāyāna work on the doctrines of some of the Buddhist schools. There are a few critiques of the Pudgalavāda which have survived in Sanskrit or Pali, and some others in Chinese or Tibetan translations. Finally, there are a few summaries of the doctrines of the Pudgalavāda in early accounts of the development of the schools. It is only natural that scholars should have directed most of their efforts toward schools such as the Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyāna, of whose literature a significant portion has survived, and especially, of course, toward those schools which continue even today as living traditions. The few remains of the Pudgalavāda must have seemed relatively unpromising material for inquiry.

Another reason may have been that the Pudgalavāda did not seem to be very important in the history of Buddhism. The meagreness of its surviving documents, the strangeness of its doctrines, at least from the standpoint of what we now think of as orthodox Buddhism, and the fact that it never had any great following outside of India may have created the impression that it was no more than a small movement on the fringe of Buddhism. If so, it was a mistaken impression; we know from Xuánzàng's (玄藏) record of his travels in India that in the seventh century CE one of the Pudgalavādin schools, the Sāṃmitīya, was second only to the Mahāyāna in the number of its adherents. The Pudgalavāda was in fact a major strand in the Buddhist tradition. But its importance is certainly not apparent without some investigation, and until its importance can be recognized, there is of course no obvious reason to undertake the investigation.

A further reason may have been that it seemed better, in view of the unorthodoxy of the Pudgalavāda, to leave its investigation until the history and doctrines of orthodox Buddhism, including the Mahāyāna, had been thoroughly explored, to postpone the study of what seemed to be Buddhism only in a rather loose sense of the term until the character of the real Buddhism had been properly

established. But of course our notion of what is orthodox in Buddhism depends very much on the kind of Buddhism we study. We tend to absorb more or less unconsciously the outlook of the particular schools of Buddhism that we investigate, and no doubt we are often attracted in the first place to the forms of Buddhism that we find most congenial. I am not suggesting that the study of the Theravāda, for example, will automatically convert us to the Theravāda, but it will certainly present the world of Buddhism to us from a Theravādin perspective, and that perspective may well seem the most natural if not the only one to adopt. There is obviously a lot to be said for learning as much as we can about all forms of Buddhism before raising the question of which are orthodox and on what basis their orthodoxy is to be established.

The earliest scholarly work devoted specifically to the Pudgalavāda was T. Stcherbatsky's *Soul Theory of the Buddhists*, first published in 1920.[1] It includes a translation (from the Tibetan) of Vasubandhu's critique of the Pudgalavāda in his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. In 1931, S. Schayer published "Kamalaśīlas Kritik des Pudgalavāda", a translation of Kamalaśīla's commentary on Śāntarakṣita's verses on the Pudgalavāda in the *Tattvasaṃgraha*. Then in 1953 K. Venkataramanan published a translation from the Chinese (in which alone it survives) of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* with an introduction and notes in which he offered the elements of an interpretation of the Pudgalavādin position. In 1959, E. Conze included in his anthology, *Buddhist Scriptures*, an abridged translation (presumably from the Tibetan) of Vasubandhu's critique of the Pudgalavāda.

It was not until 1977 that the first (and so far, the only) comprehensive treatment of the Pudgalavāda appeared, Thích Thiện Châu's doctoral dissertation for the Sorbonne, *Les sectes personnalistes (Pudgalavādin) du Bouddhisme ancien*. He has published two articles based on this work, "The Literature of the Pudgalavādins" in 1984, and "Les Réponses des Pudgalavādin aux Critiques des Écoles Bouddhiques" in 1987.[2] He seems to have been the first to identify the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*(T1505) and the *Sānfǎdù lùn* (T1506) as translations of a

[1] For details on the works mentioned in this section, see Bibliography.

[2] There are some mistakes in the published form of these articles which it may be useful to note here. In "The Literature of the Pudgalavādins", "Gautama Saṅghasena" at the bottom of p. 7 should be "Gautama Saṅghadeva", and on p. 8, where it says of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, "It is impossible to attribute this text to the Sāṃmitīyas," we can see from the dissertation (149f.) that it should read: "It is impossible to attribute this text to the Vātsīputrīyas or any of the other Pudgalavādin schools rather than the Sāṃmitīyas...;" the passage in the dissertation ends by saying, "on est en droit de penser que le SNS est vraiment un ouvrage des Sāṃmitīya" (150). In "Les Réponses des Pudgalavādin", there is on p. 39 what appears to be the translation of a passage from the *Sānfǎdù lùn* (here referred to as the TDS, *Tridharmakaśāstra*). In fact it is Thích Thiện Châu's *explanation* of the passage in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*, as is clear from the dissertation (249f.).

Pudgalavādin text. His dissertation has recently been translated into English by Sara Boin-Webb.

A few other articles relating to the Pudgalavāda have appeared over the past decade and a half. Kaiji Yōichi has published a series of articles, beginning in 1985, containing a new translation into Japanese of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*. (An earlier translation by Akanuma Chizen was included in the *Kokuyaku Issaikyō*.) Chou Po-kan published an article on the *Sānfǎdù lùn* in 1987. Peter Skilling published an article on the Sāṃmitīyas in 1982 based partly on material relating to that school in Daśabalaśrīmitra's *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya*, and since 1992 Namikawa Takayoshi has published several articles dealing with the Sāṃmitīya material quoted in the same work. Finally, James Duerlinger published an article with a translation from the Sanskrit of Vasubandhu's critique of the Pudgalavāda in 1989, and a further article discussing it in 1993.

Another useful (though unwitting) contribution to the study of the Pudgalavāda was L. Hurvitz's article of 1967, "The Road to Buddhist Salvation as Described by Vasubhadra", in which he translated part of the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* together with many of the corresponding passages in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*, though without identifying the text as a work of the Pudgalavāda. There are no obvious indications in the section that he translated that the text is in fact Pudgalavādin, and so it is not really surprising that he failed to recognize its provenance.

We should also note a number of editions and translations which, although not exclusively or primarily concerned with the Pudgalavāda, include material important for its study. The *Kathāvatthu*, which contains debates between the Theravādins and representatives of other schools on a variety of topics, was edited from 1894 to 1897 by A.C. Taylor and translated by Shwe Zan Aung and C.A.F. Rhys Davids in 1915. A part of the Sarvāstivādin *Vijñānakāya*, containing similar debates, but of course from the Sarvāstivādin standpoint, was translated from the Chinese in which it survives into French by L. de la Vallée Poussin in 1923. The *Tattvasiddhi* (or *Satyasiddhi*) of Harivarman, which includes a critique of the Pudgalavāda, was translated from the Chinese by Aiyaswami Sastri, into Sanskrit in 1975, and into English in 1978. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, whose critique of the Pudgalavāda was translated by Stcherbatsky, Conze and Duerlinger, was translated in its entirety from the Chinese and Tibetan versions into French by La Vallée Poussin and published from 1923 to 1931. The Sanskrit text, not available to Stcherbatsky or La Vallée Poussin, was edited by P. Pradhan in 1967, and by Dwarikadas Shastri, together with Yaśomitra's subcommentary, from 1970 to 1973. A portion of Bhavya's *Tarkajvālā* containing a critique of the Pudgalavāda was edited and translated by

S. Iida in his *Reason and Emptiness* in 1980. Two works by Candrakīrti with material relevant to the Pudgalavāda were edited by La Vallée Poussin: the Sanskrit text of the *Prasannapadā*, a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, from 1903 to 1913, and a Tibetan translation of the *Madhyamakāvatāra* from 1907 to 1912. He translated most of the latter work into French from 1907 to 1911. The *Prasannapadā* was translated piecemeal by various scholars into English, French and German. And finally, the Sanskrit text of Kamalaśīla's *Tattvasaṇgrahapañjikā*, whose critique of the Pudgalavāda was translated into German by Schayer, was edited by E. Kṛṣṇamācārya in 1926, and by Dwarikadas Shastri in 1968; it was translated into English in 1937 by Gaṅgānātha Jhā. This will be enough to indicate the most important texts that have been made available over the past century or so. There are in fact a number of others which I think it unnecessary to refer to here, but which will be mentioned in our survey of the sources in Chapter 4.

We should note also some texts giving an account of the development of the Early Schools, including the several schools of the Pudgalavāda, and summarizing their doctrines. None of these texts have survived in Sanskrit. Vasumitra's account was translated from Tibetan into Russian by V.P. Vasil'ev (Wassiljew) and from Russian to German by A. Schiefner in 1860. Its summaries of the doctrines of the schools were translated again from Tibetan into German (with references to the Chinese) by M. Walleser in 1927. It was translated from Xuánzàng's Chinese version into English by J. Masuda in 1925, and into French by A. Bareau in 1954. Bhavya's account was translated from Tibetan into German by Walleser in 1927, and Bhavya's and Vinītadeva's accounts were both translated from Tibetan into French by Bareau in 1956.

There are a number of discussions of the Pudgalavāda in secondary works dealing generally with the schools of Buddhism and their doctrines. M. Walleser included a section on the Pudgalavāda, with a summary of the arguments concerning the *pudgala* (or *puggala*) in the *Kathāvatthu*, in *Die Sekten des alten Buddhismus* in 1927. A. Bareau published *Les sectes bouddhiques du petit véhicule* in 1955; he gave an account of each of the Early Schools and listed their doctrines as recorded in the sources available to him at that time. E. Conze's *Buddhist Thought in India* appeared in 1962; it contains a short but thorough and generally perceptive discussion of the Pudgalavāda. In 1970, N. Dutt published *Buddhist Sects in India*, in which he summarized the main arguments used by the Pudgalavādins in support of their doctrines. S.N. Dube's *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism* was published in 1980. It is a study of the *Kathāvatthu*, and includes a detailed discussion of the debate between the Theravādins and the Pudgalavādins in the first chapter of that work.

Finally, there is useful material in many of the various histories and surveys of Buddhism. The most important of these are É. Lamotte's *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, published in 1958, and A.K. Warder's *Indian Buddhism*, first published in 1970 and revised in 1980.

The studies that I have mentioned, and especially those of Bareau, Venkataramanan and Thích Thiện Châu, though of course few by comparison with those that have been made of the Theravāda, for example, provide an adequate foundation for a more detailed inquiry into the Pudgalavādin doctrine of the person. And there is a need for such an inquiry. In spite of the work that has been done thus far, the doctrine of the *pudgala* remains somewhat obscure. Everyone agrees that the *pudgala* is indeterminate in relation to what we think of as the constituents of the person: the five "aggregates" (*skandha*), consisting of the material phenomena of the physical body, and the various phenomena, categorized as feeling, perception, mental forces and consciousness, which make up the immaterial part of our being. That is to say, the *pudgala* is not supposed to be either the same as these phenomena or different from them. But is the *pudgala* simply the phenomena themselves taken together as an organic whole which, although not something separate from the phenomena, is also not strictly reducible to them? Or is it something more than that, something relatively distinct from these phenomena and yet dependent on them and for that reason inseparable from them? And is it affirmed as a self, apparently against the Buddhist doctrine of non-self, or is it supposed to be something different from a self? And can these questions in fact be answered on the basis of the available evidence?

Some have certainly tried to answer them. Although most have understood the Pudgalavādins to have affirmed the reality of the self, Stcherbatsky (1970: 90) remarked that the Vātsīputrīyas, one of the Pudgalavādin schools, "make apparently a distinction between the terms *pudgala* and *ātman*, they are *pudgalavādinaḥ*, but not *ātmavādinaḥ*."

On the nature of the *pudgala*, Schayer observes that "in the *pudgala* which manifests itself empirically on the substratum of the *skandhas*, which assumes the 'burden' of the *skandhas* and wanders in *saṃsāra*, it is not hard to recognize the *bhūtātman* of the later Upanishads and the epics" (1931: 70f.). A little later he continues, "But whether the *pudgala* is the 'Superpersonal' which only becomes individualized as a 'person' in correlation with the psycho-physical elements must for the present remain undecided" (1931: 71).[3]

Conze's view of it is not altogether clear. On the one hand, he says, "The hypothetical *pudgala* serves as a kind of substance which provides a common

[3] Original in German.

factor for the successive processes occurring in a self-identical individual" (1967: 125), and says of the fire to which the Pudgalavādins compare the *pudgala* that it "is not just a continuous series of momentary flashes of ignition, but a substance, independent, existing by itself, consuming the fuel, just as ordinary unphilosophical thinking assumes" (128). He adds that "a man's true, transcendental, Self is indeed so subtle that only the Buddhas can see it" (129). On the other hand, he says that "the Personalists proclaimed that the self likewise [i.e. like fire] manifests itself through the psycho-physical elements, and therefore co-exists with them, not as a separate thing, but as a kind of 'structural unity'" (128). A "structural unity" might be thought of as a substance in the sense of a whole which is not reducible to its constituents, but it surely could not be described as "independent, existing by itself". Conze seems to want to describe the pudgala as both a "true, transcendental Self" and the "structural unity" of the phenomena constituting the individual person.

He may have been influenced by Venkataramanan's account. Venkataramanan suggests that the Pudgalavādins affirmed the existence of two kinds of person or self: a composite self dependent on its constituent phenomena, and an absolute self reminiscent of the supreme self of the Upanishads. He says of the Sāṃmitīyas (the Pudgalavādin school with which he is dealing) that they

> did not take the individual to be a simple inflexible entity, self identical and ultimately real. The individual is a complex of sāsrava skandhas. It is an organismic whole, conditionally existent and conditionally cognized. (1953: 159)

In his notes, he speaks of the absolute self:

> Evidently this self that is not characterized by birth and death is not the conditioned self. It is the self-luminous, absolute, unconditioned self. That the Sāṃmitīyas recognized such a self cannot now be doubted.... But the self that is the central topic of our discourse is not this eternal, absolute self but the individual, conditioned self, a self which is really a not-self and yet to which we cling in our ignorance as our real self. (1953: 219, n. 28)

That the individual self is "really a not-self" is evident from its mutability, for "the eternal, the immutable is the real nature of the self..." (159).

Thích Thiện Châu says relatively little about the precise nature of the *pudgala*; for the most part, he lets his sources speak for themselves, and they

unfortunately incline more to obscurity than precision. But he remarks that "the *pudgala*, according to the Pudgalavādins, is a designation (*prajñapti*), but not an absolute reality" (1987: 43);[4] this seems to indicate that he regards the *pudgala* as something like Venkataramanan's "individual, conditioned self". However, he also says that the *pudgala* "is something more than the combination of its constituents. It is the essential factor that unifies a person's life processes" (1984: 9). This is still perhaps consistent with Venkataramanan's "organismic whole", though it more strongly resembles Conze's account of it as "a kind of substance which provides a common factor for the successive processes occurring in a self-identical individual". But he speaks of the *pudgala* that has attained final release in Parinirvana as the supreme person: "It is thus that, according to the Pudgalavādins, the liberated one who attains Parinirvana is the person *par excellence* (*uttamapuriso*, *paramapuriso*) who has achieved the complete extinction of the impure aggregates, having attained the further bank where he enjoys blessedness" (1987: 38).[5] If the person *par excellence* is the one who enjoys blessedness when his phenomenal constituents have vanished for ever, it would seem that the *pudgala* is not after all an "organismic whole" formed of those constituents. The *pudgala* must surely be a different kind of being entirely, but Thích Thiện Châu says nothing further to indicate what its nature might be. He says nothing about any kind of absolute self.

My intention, then, is to try to move toward a clearer understanding of the person as conceived by the Pudgalavādins. This study is accordingly quite limited in scope. For the most part, it deals only with material bearing directly on the question of the *pudgala*. It refers to other doctrines of the Pudgalavāda only when these appear to shed some light on this central question. It is thus not meant to be a survey of the Pudgalavāda; for that one should consult the work of Thích Thiện Châu.

I have not attempted to offer an evaluation of the Pudgalavādins' position, apart from noting its general plausibility and offering a few comments on the propriety of accepting it as a legitimate form of Buddhism; my concern is simply to establish as well as possible what that position was. It will be unnecessary, then, to examine here all of the arguments used by the Pudgalavādins and their opponents; our inquiry will be limited to those arguments which help to clarify the nature of the *pudgala*. It will likewise be unnecessary to consider all of the scriptural passages to which the Pudgalavādins referred as authority for their doctrine. But we may certainly look at those that are helpful in explaining it, and

[4] Original in French.

[5] Original in French.

at others, not quoted directly in our sources, which we have reason to think they had in mind.

My interpretation of the doctrine of the *pudgala* is necessarily somewhat speculative; what I am attempting is the reconstruction of a vanished system of ideas on the basis of evidence which is fragmentary and to some extent ambiguous. One might wonder, perhaps, whether such an attempt is even advisable in view of the nature of the evidence. But the evidence *is* evidence, and it is surely appropriate to see how much can be reasonably concluded (or at least guessed at) on its basis; but that cannot be determined unless we make the attempt. But as in disciplines such as archeology and astronomy, where likewise the available evidence is chronically incomplete, many of our conclusions will have to remain tentative and subject to future revision.

It might be suggested, then, that a study of this kind is premature. The most important of the surviving texts are exceptionally difficult, and all the work that has been done on them so far represents no more than the initial stages in the process of their elucidation. Would it not be better to wait until they have been studied thoroughly and then to proceed with the attempt at reconstruction on the basis of evidence that has been properly established? But the elucidation of these texts requires a knowledge of the schools they belonged to, and for that we need the kind of study that I have undertaken. The study of the texts and the study of the doctrines which they contain are interdependent and ought to proceed together, each developing in the light of the other. The present study thus involves not only an attempt at reconstructing the views of the Pudgalavāda, but also some further advances in the interpretation of their texts.

After a survey of the doctrinal background and history of the Pudgalavāda, and of the sources available for its study, we shall proceed to a detailed examination of the doctrine of the person. Our inquiry will be in two stages. In the first, we shall explore the possibility that the *pudgala* was supposed to be a composite entity consisting of the various phenomena that make up our being but not reducible to them. When the difficulties with this interpretation have become apparent, we shall move on to a second interpretation, according to which the *pudgala* was supposed to be a temporal manifestation of a timeless reality. We shall find it necessary to digress at two points: once in order to investigate the Pudgalavādin understanding of the varieties of truth, and again in order to explore the nature of conceptual entities. Otherwise, our progress will be relatively direct, although the material itself is of course anything but straightforward. We shall conduct a final review of the arguments and evidence in support of the second interpretation, and then conclude by considering the position of the Pudgalavāda within Buddhism as a whole.

Chapter I

The Doctrine of Non-Self

THE unreality of the self is often felt to be the central and indeed the defining doctrine of Buddhism. It is certainly the doctrine most dramatically opposed to common sense. We feel that we are real and that our experience is somehow self-evident. To deny the reality of the self seems to amount to saying, "I do not exist," and that surely is a statement which, if not directly self-contradictory, is at least impossible for anyone to say truthfully. Such a doctrine is intriguing by reason of its apparent absurdity coupled with the vast influence and prestige of the religious philosophy to which it is central.

What did the Buddha himself say about this? Unfortunately, we cannot be sure. The only record we have of what he said is in the sutras transmitted, at first orally and then in writing, through the various schools of Buddhism. It is reasonable to assume that what he is reported to have said in the sutras is related, and perhaps closely related, to what he actually said; but that is still no more than an assumption, and the Buddhist tradition may after all have diverged widely from the original utterances of its founder. For our purposes, however, what is important is not what he actually said, but what he is recorded as saying in the sutras, since these are the sayings on whose basis the early Buddhists developed their doctrines. When I speak of the Buddha, then, and of the Buddha's teaching, it is to be understood that I am talking about the Buddha as portrayed in the sutras and other early canonical texts, and the teachings ascribed to him in these texts.

In what way, then, is the Buddha represented as denying the reality of the self? What he denies is not the occurrence of that system of interrelated phenomena which is responsible for the utterance of statements such as "I do not exist". He denies that there is any *ātman* (self) to be discovered, either among those interrelated phenomena and their combinations or as something apart from them. This *ātman* is evidently a "self" not merely in the sense of a person distinguishable from other persons and things, but in the sense of a distinct and enduring entity, something more like the "immortal soul" of Western religions. But the term '*ātman*' is not exactly equivalent to 'soul'. The *ātman* is the self, understood as something distinct and enduring which is supposed to constitute our real identity. The "soul" of the various Western traditions can be thought of as corresponding to a particular interpretation of '*ātman*', but others are possible.

The physical body, for example, can be regarded as an *ātman* that persists during the lifetime of the person and disintegrates at death. The Buddha naturally presents his denial of the self (so understood) in terms of the ideas of selfhood current in India at the time, but his aim seems to be not simply to refute particular theories of the self or even to refute all such theories in general; he is concerned rather with the way in which something akin to these theories (and no doubt expressing itself in them) permeates our ordinary, unreflective awareness as an unconscious organizing principle, through which patterns of craving and attachment develop, which in turn give rise to the experience of misery and dissatisfaction, and all the suffering which the Buddha's teaching was meant to overcome. The belief in a "soul" or "*ātman*" as conceived by any particular philosophy or religion is from this standpoint only the symptom of a deeper and more pervasive problem.

As a result of primordial ignorance (*avidyā*), as a result, that is, of our instinctive belief in a distinct, enduring self, craving (*tṛṣṇā*) is generated, and from craving, all the various forms of suffering (*duḥkha*). This process is explained systematically in the doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*). The doctrine of dependent origination is thus important as showing how suffering arises from the belief in self. But it is important also as an explanation of what the Buddha evidently understands to be the real nature of our personal existence: we are not permanent, unchanging beings, but what we are now is the result of what we have done in the past, and what we do now will determine the character of our existence in the future. Even the doctrine of rebirth (which was widely though not universally accepted by the Buddha's contemporaries) is now reinterpreted as involving no distinct, persisting entity which transmigrates from one body to the next; it is the person's deeds (*karman*), specifically in the sense of his volitional acts, which cause the occurrence of the phenomena associated with that person in his next existence. The person can thus be said to continue as the same person in very much the same way as a fire, in which nothing is exactly the same from one moment to the next, can be said to continue as the same fire. There is no unchanging entity in either case, but the continuity of the process by which each can be identified will allow us to speak of it as something continuing through time.

The Buddha describes this doctrine as a middle way between the extremes of permanence and annihilation:

> Now then, Gotama, is suffering self-made?
>
> Not so, Kassapa, said the Fortunate One.
>
> But is suffering, Gotama, made by another?

> Not so, Kassapa, said the Fortunate One.
>
> Well then, Gotama, is suffering both self-made and made by another?
>
> Not so, Kassapa, said the Fortunate One.
>
> But is suffering, Gotama, as neither one's own deed nor another's, spontaneously arisen?
>
> Not so, Kassapa, said the Fortunate One.
>
> Well then, Gotama, does suffering not exist?
>
> No, Kassapa, it is not that suffering does not exist. Suffering exists, Kassapa.
>
> Then Gotama does not know suffering, does not see it?
>
> No, Kassapa, it is not that I do not know suffering or see it. I know suffering, Kassapa; I see suffering.
>
> When asked whether suffering is self-made, you said, "Not so, Kassapa." When asked whether suffering is made by another, you said, "Not so, Kassapa." When asked whether suffering is both self-made and made by another, you said, "Not so, Kassapa." When asked whether suffering, as neither one's own deed nor another's, is spontaneously arisen, you said, "Not so, Kassapa." When asked whether suffering is non-existent, you said, "No, Kassapa, it is not that suffering does not exist. Suffering exists, Kassapa." When asked whether Gotama does not know suffering, does not see it, you said, "No, Kassapa, it is not that I do not know suffering or see it. I know suffering, Kassapa; I see suffering." Let the Fortunate One explain suffering to me; let the Fortunate One teach me about suffering.
>
> Saying that the one who acts is the one who experiences [the result], Kassapa, that the suffering belongs to the former and so is self-made, this leads to eternalism. Saying that one acts and another experiences [the result], Kassapa, that the suffering belongs to the one overwhelmed by the feeling and so was made by another, this leads to annihilationism. Avoiding both of these extremes, Kassapa, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma according to the middle: because of ignorance, there are actions; because of actions, there is consciousness.... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. But by the complete fading away and cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of actions, there is the cessation of consciousness.... Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. (S ii 19f.)

The person who experiences the effects of his own past deeds is not identical with the person he was when he did them, but it would be absurd to say that he is a

completely different person. The one is linked to the other by the process in which each represents a particular stage.

It is on this basis that the Buddha is able to explain to Citta how the three "acquisitions of selfhood" (material, mental and formless) are related to each other in personal existence:

> At the time, sir, when one has acquired material selfhood, is mental self-acquisition false for one at that time, and is formless self-acquisition false? Is it only material self-acquisition that is true for one at that time? [And so on for the other two.]
>
> At the time, Citta, when one has acquired material selfhood, it is not at that time called mental self-acquisition, nor is it called formless self-acquisition. It is only called material self-acquisition at that time. [And so on for the other two.]
>
> Suppose they were to ask you, Citta, "Were you existent in the past and not non-existent? Will you be existent in the future and not non-existent? Are you existent now and not non-existent?" When asked this how would you respond?
>
> When asked this [as above] I should say that I was existent in the past and not non-existent, that I shall be existent in the future and not non-existent, and that I am existent now and not non-existent.
>
> But suppose they were to ask you, Citta, "That past self-acquisition that you had, is it only that self-acquisition that is true for you, and the future and present, false? That future self-acquisition that you will have, is it only that self-acquisition that is true for you, and the past and present, false? That present self-acquisition that you have, is it only that self-acquisition that is true for you, and the past and future, false?" When asked this how would you respond?
>
> When asked this [as above] I should say that it is only that past self-acquisition that I had that was true for me at that time, and the future and present, false; that it is only that future self-acquisition that I shall have that will be true for me at that time, and the past and present, false; that it is only that present self-acquisition that I have that is true for me, and the past and future, false.
>
> Even so, Citta, at the time when one has acquired material selfhood, it is not at that time called mental self-acquisition, nor is it called formless self-acquisition. It is only called material self-acquisition at that time. [And so on for the other two.]

> Just as from a cow, Citta, there is milk, and from the milk cream (*dadhi*)[1], and from the cream butter, and from the butter ghee, and from the ghee cream of ghee, but at the time when it is milk it is not called cream, or butter, or ghee, or cream of ghee; and at the time when it is cream it is not called milk [and so on], even so, Citta, at the time when one has acquired material selfhood, it is not called mental self-acquisition, nor is it called formless self-acquisition. It is only called material self-acquisition at that time. [And so on for the other two.] These, Citta, are worldly appellations, expressions, turns of speech and designations, by which the Tathāgata expresses himself without being misled by them. (D i 199–202)

There is no distinct entity in the milk which assumes the characteristics of cream, butter and so on while remaining unchanged itself, but neither is the butter something entirely different from the milk. Similarly there is no distinct entity in the person which continues unchanged through its various existences, but the person in the past, the person now and the person in the future are properly spoken of as the same person.

These successive persons who are the same person are, according to the Buddha, "worldly appellations, expressions, turns of speech and designations"; they are the forms, created by language, in which particular features of the continuum of phenomena are brought to our attention. And the person existing at any particular time is likewise nothing separate from the system of interrelated phenomena by which that person is identified. The phenomena (*dharma*) by which the person is thus identified can be organized into five groups or aggregates (*skandha*): physical form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saṃjñā*), volition and other mental forces (*saṃskāra*), and consciousness (*vijñāna*). It is presumably to the constantly changing continuum of the phenomena of these five aggregates that terms like 'I' and 'self' actually refer, since there is no permanent, unchanging self to be discovered.

Considering the importance of this doctrine, one might have expected the Buddha to deny the existence of the self, clearly and unequivocally, at every opportunity. In fact, his approach is curiously indirect. His discourse in the Deer Park at Benares is typical:

> Physical form, monks, is non-self. If physical form, monks, were self, then this physical form would not tend to sickness, and one could say of

[1] '*Dadhi*' is usually translated as "curds". But we get butter not from curds, but from cream. "Coagulated milk" is one of the meanings that Monier-Williams gives for '*dadhi*'.

physical form, "Let my physical form be thus; let my physical form not be thus." But since physical form is non-self, monks, therefore physical form tends to sickness, and one cannot say of physical form, "Let my physical form be thus; let my physical form not be thus." [And so likewise for feeling, perception, mental forces and consciousness.]

Now what do you think, monks? Is physical form permanent or impermanent?

Impermanent, sir.

But what is impermanent, is that suffering or happiness?

Suffering, sir.

But what is impermanent, suffering, subject to alteration, is it proper to regard it thus: "This is mine; I am this; this is my self"?

Not at all, sir.

[And so also for feeling, perception, mental forces and consciousness.]

Therefore, monks, whatever the physical form, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, poor or excellent, far or near, all physical form should be seen thus, as it really is, by right wisdom: "This is not mine; I am not this; this is not my self."

[And so also for feeling, perception, mental forces and consciousness.]

So seeing, monks, the learned Ariyan disciple feels disillusioned with physical form, feels disillusioned with feeling, with perception and mental forces, feels disillusioned with consciousness. Feeling disillusioned, he is indifferent; by indifference he is freed; when freed, there is the knowledge that he is freed: "Exhausted is rebirth; lived is the life of purity; what was to be done has been done; for this world there is nothing further." (S iii 66–68)

The five aggregates are not the self because they are not fully subject to our will; what one wishes to change is perhaps felt to be necessarily different from what wishes to change it: they cannot both be the self. There may also be the suggestion that sickness is inconsistent with what a self is supposed to be, that a true self would not be subject to any kind of imperfection. This impression is strengthened by the later part of the discourse: "Then what is impermanent, suffering, subject to alteration, is it proper to regard it thus: 'This is mine; I am this; this is my self'?"

In another sutra he is asked:

Now what, sir, is old age and death, and whose is this old age and death?

> Not a fit question, said the Fortunate One. If you ask, monk, "What is old age and death, and whose is this old age and death?" or if you ask, "Is old age and death one thing and the one who ages and dies another?" these both are the same in meaning; only the expression is different. When there is the view, monk, that the living being (*jīva*) and the body are the same thing or the view that the living being and the body are different things, there is no life of purity. Avoiding both of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma according to the middle: because of birth, there is old age and death. (S ii 60f.)

The self, here represented by the term '*jīva*', is not the same as the body; otherwise it would be destroyed at death. But neither is it different from the body, for then it could exist independently of the body and would be permanent. Here again the Buddha's position is the middle between two extremes, in this case identity and difference.

In another sutra (S iii 96) he sets out a variety of opinions about the self: that the self possesses physical form, that physical form is in the self, or that the self is in physical form, and likewise for the other four aggregates; or that the self will exist permanently after death, or that on the contrary it is subject to annihilation. All of these erroneous opinions are, he says, mental forces (*saṃkhāra*; Sanskrit *saṃskāra*), that is, they constitute karma, and so lead ultimately to rebirth and further suffering. In fact there is no theory of self which does not lead to suffering:

> You may grasp that theory of self, monks, by which for one grasping that theory of self there would not arise grief, lamentation, depression and desperation. Now do you see, monks, the grasping of a theory of self by which for one grasping that theory of self there would not arise grief, lamentation, suffering, depression and desperation?
>
> No, sir, we do not.
>
> Good, monks. Neither do I, monks, see the grasping of a theory of self by which for one grasping that theory of self there would not arise grief, lamentation, suffering, depression and desperation. You may have reliance on that view, monks, by which for one relying on that view there would not arise grief, lamentation, suffering, depression and desperation. Now do you see, monks, the reliance on a view by which for one relying on that view there would not arise grief, lamentation, suffering, depression and desperation?

> No, sir, we do not.
>
> Good, monks. Neither do I, monks, see the reliance on a view by which for one relying on that view there would not arise grief, lamentation, suffering, depression and desperation. There being a self, monks, might one think, "It belongs to my self"?
>
> Yes, sir, one might.
>
> Or there being what belongs to a self, might one think, "It is my self"?
>
> Yes, sir, one might.
>
> But when self, monks, and what belongs to self cannot be found in actuality and truth, then this speculative position (*diṭṭhiṭṭhāna*), "The self is the world; after dying I shall be permanent, stable, not subject to alteration; I shall endure even as the eternal," surely this, monks, is wholly and utterly a doctrine of fools.
>
> How indeed, sir, could it not be wholly and utterly a doctrine of fools? (M i 137f.)

If no distinct self can be discovered in reality, every theory about a self wiH accordingly be pointless:

> For one who is thus unmethodical in his attention, there arises one of six views: the view, "I have a self," arises for him as actual and true; or the view, "I have no self," arises for him as actual and true; or the view, "I perceive the self only by the self," ..."I perceive non-self only by the self," ..."I perceive the self only by non-self," or...he has such a view as this: "This self of mine which speaks and feels, which experiences here and there the results of deeds good and bad, this self of mine is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to alteration; it will endure even as the eternal." This, monks, is called resorting to views, the thicket of views, the wilderness of views, the wriggling of views, the struggling of views, the fetter of views. (M i 8)

Curiously enough, then, even the *denial* of the self (which is what the belief in annihilation seems to amount to) will be wrong or at any rate pointless, perhaps because it tends to focus attention on the very notion that it is meant to dispel; and of course it will also tend to obscure the continuity of the causal series according to which we are said to experience the consequences of our deeds.

We begin to understand, then, why the Buddha may have been unwilling to say directly that the self does not exist. When the wanderer Vacchagotta asks him

if the self exists, he is silent; when he asks him if the self does not exist, he is again silent. Afterwards he explains to Ānanda:

> If upon being asked, Ānanda, by the wanderer Vacchagotta, "Is there a self?" I had answered, "There is a self," then, Ānanda, that would be to agree with those ascetics and brahmans who are eternalists. But if upon being asked, Ānanda, by the wanderer Vacchagotta, "Is there no self?" I had answered, "There is no self," then, Ānanda, that would be to agree with those ascetics and brahmans who are annihilationists. (S iv 400f.)

Someone who believes in a distinct self and understands the world in terms of such a self will misunderstand even the denial of self in a way that maintains the notion of self as a basis for attachment. It seems to be the notion of self which in fact binds us to suffering and rebirth as long as we feel it to be something important to us, no matter whether we affirm or deny it. As the Buddha explains in another sutra:

> Whatever one intends, monks, whatever one plans and whatever one dwells on, this is a basis for the persistence of consciousness. When there is the basis, there comes to be a station of consciousness. When the stationed consciousness has grown, there is in future the production of further existence, and with the production of further existence, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, depression and desperation arise. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.
>
> If one does not intend it, monks, nor plan, and yet dwells on it, this too is a basis for the persistence of consciousness. [And so on, as above.]
>
> But as a result of not intending it, monks, nor planning nor dwelling on it, this does not become a basis for the persistence of consciousness. The basis being absent, there is in the future no production of further existence, and without the production of further existence, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, depression and desperation cease. Such is the ceasing of this whole mass of suffering. (S ii 65)

The concern to reject something binds us to it just as the desire to keep it does:

> In this regard, monks, the Tathāgata understands that those worthy ascetics and brahmans who declare the cutting off, the destruction, the

> annihilation of an existing being, these, afraid of their existing body, disgusted with their existing body, run around and circle around their existing body. Just as a dog tethered by a leash tied to a strong pillar or stake runs around and circles around the pillar or stake, so do these worthy ascetics and brahmans, afraid of their existing body. disgusted with their existing body, run around and circle around their existing body. (M ii 233)

Denial of the self without a clear understanding of the sense in which the self is to be denied simply leads us back, then, to our original fascination with self, but now in terms of something subject to destruction, or of which we feel that we have been deprived.

> Again, Ānanda, upon being asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta, "Is there a self?" if I had answered, "There is a self," would that have been suitable for the arising of the knowledge that all *dhammas* are non-self?
>
> No, sir, it would not.
>
> Again, Ānanda, upon being asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta, "Is there no self ?" if I had answered, "There is no self," it would have made for more bewilderment for the bewildered Vacchagotta: "Formerly indeed I had a self, but now it does not exist." (S iv 401)

So the Buddha is willing to say that all phenomena are non-self, but he will not tell someone who is firmly attached to the notion of self that the self does not exist, for fear of merely aggravating the problem.

Since the Buddha teaches that there will be no rebirth for a Tathāgata, he is naturally sensitive to the suggestion that his doctrine is a form of annihilationism, that what he teaches is a way to annihilation. Certainly when he says of his own enlightenment, "Knowledge and insight arose in me: secure is my freedom; this is the last birth; there is not now any further becoming" (M i 167), he seems to be saying that the beginningless series of his lives will come to an end with his death, and that he will have no existence after that. But to the suggestion that this would constitute annihilation, he replies:

> There are some ascetics and brahmans who misrepresent me wrongly, vainly, falsely, untruly, saying, "The ascetic Gotama is a nihilist; he declares the cutting off, the destruction, the annihilation of an existing being." But as what I am not, monks, and as saying what I do not, so do

> these worthy ascetics and brahmans misrepresent me wrongly, vainly, falsely, untruly when they say, "The ascetic Gotama is a nihilist; he declares the cutting off, the destruction, the annihilation of an existing being." Both formerly and now, monks, I declare only suffering and the cessation of suffering. (M i 140)

And when one of his own monks, Yamaka, persists in giving such an interpretation to the end of rebirth, he sends Sāriputta to explain the truth to him:

> Now what do you think, friend Yamaka? Do you regard the Tathāgata as physical form (*rūpa*)?
>
> No, friend, I do not.
>
> [Or as feeling, perception, mental forces or consciousness?]
>
> No, friend, I do not.
>
> Now what do you think, friend Yamaka? Do you regard the Tathāgata as in physical form?
>
> No, friend, I do not.
>
> Do you regard the Tathāgata as elsewhere than in physical form?
>
> No, friend, I do not.
>
> [Or as in feeling, or as elsewhere than in feeling, or as in perception, or as elsewhere than in perception, or as in mental forces, or as elsewhere than in mental forces, or as in consciousness, or as elsewhere than in consciousness?]
>
> No, friend, I do not.
>
> Now what do you think, friend Yamaka? Do you regard the Tathāgata as physical form, feeling, perception, mental forces and consciousness?
>
> No, friend, I do not.
>
> Now what do you think, friend Yamaka? Do you regard the Tathāgata as one who has no physical form, no feeling, no perception, no mental forces and no consciousness?
>
> No, friend, I do not.
>
> Then, friend Yamaka, since in this world the Tathāgata is not to be found in actuality and truth, is it right, this explanation of yours: "Thus I understand the Dhamma taught by the Fortunate One, that a monk whose influxes have been destroyed, with the breaking up of his body, is cut off, perishes, does not exist after death"?
>
> In my ignorance, friend Sāriputta, I formerly resorted to this wrong view, but having heard the venerable Sāriputta's instruction in Dhamma, I

> have given up resorting to this wrong view; I have realized the Dhamma. (S iii 111f.)

One might feel that this is really a quibble: the five aggregates which we would normally identify as the Tathāgata may not in the strictest sense constitute a self, but surely these five aggregates, however conceived, do in fact come to an end; the Tathāgata (using the term simply to indicate a particular series of phenomena) *is* annihilated. The Buddha's Parinirvana is the complete disappearance, the ceasing to exist, of everything by which we could identify him as a person. Surely this is simply what many people now assume death to be, but without the usual clinging to what vanishes in death, so that the annihilation of the person is not felt to be the annihilation of anything that was ever really oneself in the first place. It is annihilation, but without any of the fear that the idea of annihilation normally brings.

But the way in which the Buddha speaks of the Tathāgata after death makes it hard to believe that he is speaking *only* of the cessation of the series of the five aggregates, of something which we perhaps inevitably try to imagine as a kind of subjective nothingness.

> Now what do you think, Vaccha? If a fire were burning before you, would you know that a fire was burning before you?
>
> If a fire were burning before me, Gotama, I should know that a fire was burning before me.
>
> But if someone were to ask you, Vaccha, "For what reason does this fire burn that is burning before you?" how would you reply, Vaccha, when questioned thus?
>
> If someone were to ask me, Gotama, "For what reason does this fire burn that is burning before you?" I would reply, Gotama, when questioned thus, "This fire that is burning before me burns because of its fuel of grass and sticks."
>
> If the fire that was before you, Vaccha, were to be extinguished, would you know that that fire that was before you had been extinguished?
>
> If the fire that was before me were to be extinguished, Gotama, I should know that that fire that was before me had been extinguished.
>
> But if someone were to ask you, Vaccha, "In what direction has it gone from here, that fire which was before you and has been extinguished: to the east, west, north or south?" how would you reply, Vaccha, when questioned thus?

> It does not apply, Gotama. For that fire burned because of its fuel of grass and sticks, and as that has been consumed and no more has been given to it, it has no sustenance and so is said to be extinguished.
>
> Even so, Vaccha, that physical form by which one identifying the Tathāgata might identify him, that physical form has been done away with by the Tathāgata, its roots cut up, made like an uprooted palm tree, made unable to become, not liable to arise in the future. Freed from definition according to physical form is the Tathāgata, Vaccha, deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean. 'Arises' does not apply, 'does not arise' does not apply, 'both arises and does not arise' does not apply, 'neither arises nor does not arise' does not apply. [And so likewise for feeling, perception, mental forces and consciousness.] (M i 487f.)

The extinction of the fire would appear to be simply the annihilation of the fire; would the Buddha not agree that the fire no longer exists after it is extinguished? The term used for the fuel (*upādāna*) means also the appropriation or attachment by which we identify the five aggregates as ourselves and cling to them; the term used for "extinguished" (*nibbuta*) is the same that is used for the extinction of craving and suffering, and related, of course, to the term for the death of a Buddha, 'Parinirvana', "complete extinction". But whereas the point of the simile would appear to be that like the fire, the Tathāgata does not go anywhere at all when he dies, being completely extinguished, what the Buddha actually says is quite different: "Freed from definition according to physical form is the Tathāgata, Vaccha, deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean." And although the fire can surely be said not to arise again in the absence of any fuel, the Tathāgata cannot be said to arise, not to arise, both or neither. It seems clear that the Tathāgata is *not* extinguished (or annihilated) as the fire is; he is rather revealed as something utterly beyond our comprehension.

But then what is the point of the simile? Perhaps we misunderstand, from our modern perspective, the significance of the extinction of a fire for the Buddha's contemporaries; perhaps, as Robinson suggested (1970: 38f.), the extinction is not strictly annihilation, but a "going home" (*atthaṃgama*) of the fire to its unmanifest state; '*atthaṃgata*' is in fact the term used in a similar passage in the *Suttanipāta* (SN 1074–1076). Such an interpretation may seem Upanishadic rather than Buddhist, but we have to bear in mind that Vacchagotta was not yet a Buddhist—he was just at the point of becoming a lay-disciple—and so this might be precisely how he would have understood it. In any case, it seems clear

that the Tathāgata after death, "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean," is not annihilated in any ordinary sense of the word.[2]

But since the Tathāgata even in this life is, as we have seen, "undiscoverable in truth, in reality," it would seem that in this life also he is "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean". And if that is because he cannot be identified with any of the five aggregates, then surely every person is similarly "unfathomable", for in the five aggregates that constitute the person of any one of us, no self is to be found. All of us, then, are essentially unfathomable; but it is the Tathāgata who is actually so described, and this seems to be because he is free of the *misapprehension* of self to which the rest of us are subject.

> And how, monks, does a monk become an Ariya (a Noble One), with flag laid down, with burden laid down, unyoked? Here, monks, the pride of "I am" is done away with by the monk, its roots cut up, made like an uprooted palm tree, made unable to become, not liable to arise in the future. Thus, monks, a monk becomes an Ariya, with flag laid down, with burden laid down, unyoked.
>
> Monks, when a monk with mind thus freed is sought by the gods with Inda, with Brahmā, with Pajāpati, they do not find him [so as to be able to say], "Supported here is the Tathāgata's consciousness." What is the reason for this? I say, monks, that a Tathāgata is untraceable in the visible world." (M i 139f.)

The rest of us can be traced by our karma; through the misapprehension that we are simply ourselves, we function (in part) as if we were distinct beings, thinking and behaving selfishly, and so generating the craving and attachment that lead to rebirth.

> A sentient being, a sentient being it is called. Now in what respect , sir, is it called a distinct being?
>
> Clinging (*satta*) to that desire, Rādha, that lust, that pleasure, that craving which is for physical form and attached (*visatta*) to that, therefore it is called a sentient being (*satta*). [And so also for feeling, perception, mental forces and consciousness.] (S iii 190)

But the Buddha, seeing the true nature of our existence, is free of the misapprehension of self; governed only by the truth, devoid of craving, he is

[2] See also Thanissaro, 1993: 15–37.

manifestly selfless. Although we can refer to him in terms of the five aggregates with which he is associated, he is in reality incomprehensible, no less while he is alive than after his death.

Nirvana is similarly incomprehensible. It seems initially to be simply the peace that results from the abolition of craving and attachment, a state of tranquillity which is permanent in the sense that nothing in the remainder of one's life can in any way disturb it. But if it is a state of mind, it would seem to be something produced, presumably by enlightenment, and it must surely come to an end at death, along with the body which it accompanied and the mind of which it was a state. So it is permanent only in the very limited sense in which any state which endures for an appreciable length of time may be said to be permanent.

But if Nirvana were no more than a subjective state, it would make no sense to say that the Tathāgata while alive is essentially the same as what he is after his death; for before his death the tranquillity which we call Nirvana exists, whereas after his death, his mind and its Nirvana have both perished. Unless we are to suppose that the Parinirvana is the "tranquillity" of complete non-existence, and that the Tathāgata after his death is "unfathomable" only in the sense that in the non-existent there is nothing to fathom, we must assume that Nirvana is not simply a state of mind, but is a reality which in some sense co-exists with the five aggregates by which we identify the Buddha, and continues to exist after his death. The Buddha speaks of it, in fact, as a reality which transcends all of our categories:

> There is, monks, that sphere in which there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor the sphere of infinite space, nor the sphere of infinite consciousness, nor the sphere of nothingness, nor the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, nor this world, nor the other world, nor moon and sun. That, monks, I describe as neither coming nor going nor remaining nor passing away nor arising; it is not fixed, not proceeding, without basis. Just this is the end of suffering. (U 80)

The permanence of Nirvana is assured by its independence: it is not part of the system of dependent origination (which is the world as we know it), and so there is nothing whose alteration would cause it to vanish.

> There is, monks, an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an uncreated. If there were not, monks, the unborn, the unbecome, the unmade, the uncreated, no escape would be known from the born, the become, the

> made, the created. But since, monks, there is the unborn, the unbecome, the unmade, the uncreated, therefore an escape is known from the born, the become, the made, the created. (U 80f.)

But if Nirvana is the uncreated (*asaṃkhata*; Sanskrit *asaṃskṛta*) and has no part in the coming and going of the phenomena of the five aggregates, in what sense can one be said to attain Nirvana? Surely the mind which recognizes Nirvana ceases to exist with death, and although Nirvana may continue to exist, it will not be known to exist, since any faculty by which it might have been perceived or recognized will have disappeared. What does it matter to a being who is inseparable from the five aggregates if Nirvana continues to exist after the five aggregates have passed away? Or is it enough to know that the reality attained with enlightenment will continue eternally, even though all consciousness of that reality will soon be ended?

But another sutra seems to indicate that here too we have misunderstood the nature of Nirvana. A monk has ascended through meditation to the various realms of the gods and has asked them, "Where, friends, do these four material elements cease without remainder: the element of earth, the element of water, the element of fire and the element of air?" The gods of each realm declare themselves unable to answer his question and refer him to the next realm in the celestial hierarchy. When he comes at last to Mahābrahmā, the greatest of the gods, Mahābrahmā takes him aside (unwilling to show his ignorance before his followers) and advises him to talk to the Buddha. The Buddha says to him:

> Now this question, monk, should not be asked thus: "Where, sir, do these four material elements cease without remainder: the element of earth, the element of water, the element of fire and the element of air?" It should be asked thus:
>
> Where do earth, water, fire and air have no footing,
> and long and short, fine and coarse, fair and foul?
> Where do both name and form perish without remainder?
>
> To that the answer is:
>
> A consciousness that is indefinable, infinite and universally brilliant:[3]
> here earth, water, fire and air have no footing,
> and long and short, fine and coarse, fair and foul.
> Here both name and form perish without remainder.
> Through the cessation of consciousness, those perish here. (D i 223)

[3] Reading "*pabhaṃ*", as in the Nālandā edition (1958: 1.190).

The sutra here is certainly talking about Nirvana,[4] in which not only the four material elements but all the opposing pairs of phenomena, including mind and matter (*nāmarūpa*, name and form), have come to an end. What is remarkable is that Nirvana is spoken of as a kind of infinite consciousness, in evident contrast to the ordinary consciousness, leading to rebirth, which is mentioned in the last line of the verse. Now an infinite consciousness, whatever it might be, is clearly not consciousness in any ordinary sense of the term; but it must be something which is more like consciousness than anything else, and which is *not* something existing outside of the continuum of our experience, but is rather an element in our experience which is not included among the five aggregates, which is uncovered as it were through enlightenment, and which continues to exist after the five aggregates have gone. Nirvana is then after all something resembling a state of mind, but not strictly speaking of *our* mind, or indeed of *any* mind as a discrete system of mental phenomena.

Why does the Buddha not express all of this more clearly? No doubt because we understand things according to the categories of our thought and language, and if these categories are to some extent inadequate or misleading, any explanation of what is beyond the scope of these categories will be almost certain to be misinterpreted; and in fact we may wonder whether something beyond the scope of our categories can really be talked about at all. An explanation which is offered in terms of these categories, even if the subject is something beyond their scope, is likely to seem relatively clear; one which tries to indicate some reality without relying on these categories is liable to seem obscure if not actually evasive. The Buddha evidently believes that Nirvana lies beyond the scope of our categories, and that any but the most indirect definition of Nirvana would only aggravate our confusion.

The question of the self is closely related to that of Nirvana. What the Tathāgata is manifestly when he has attained Nirvana is what all of us are essentially, and that is something "unfathomable" both while we are alive and after we are dead. But clearly the Tathāgata and we ourselves *can* be talked about; we know who we are; we can identify ourselves and each other. And so it is natural for us to wonder how the beings whom we can identify are related to what is unfathomable in them, to ask how the Tathāgata is related to the five aggregates. And that of course is what the Buddha will not explain.

The difficulty is partly, no doubt, that no relation is conceivable between the five aggregates and the incomprehensible nature of the Tathāgata, since otherwise

[4] Cf. MA ii 393.

the Tathāgata would simply be another phenomenon with a determinate relation to those we already know. But the difficulty may also be that the belief in self is precisely what prevents us from recognizing the nature of the Tathāgata. As long as we see the problem in terms of selfhood, we remain incapable of solving it; the question we ask is what conceals the answer from us. Any attempt to answer the question in terms of selfhood will thus obstruct the insight which alone would make the answer intelligible.

Moreover, the nature of the self was already one of the principal topics of debate among the wandering philosophers (*śramaṇa*), and had been important in the Brahmanical tradition since the time of the early Upanishads. Anyone with pretensions to wisdom was expected to hold a position of some kind on the nature of the self. Some, like the Jains and Ājīvikas, held the self to be permanent and unchanging, essentially different from the body and the other transitory aspects of our being; others, like the materialist identified in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* as Ajita Kesakambalin (D i 55f.), denied that there was any self apart from the physical body. In these we can recognize the Eternalists and Annihilationists to which the Buddha referred. But there were evidently many theories of self within these broad categories; the *Brahmajālasutta* presents an extraordinary variety of doctrines concerning the self and its state after death (D i 12–38). Many of the Buddha's contemporaries must have been familiar with these theories and would naturally be curious to learn which of the various positions the Buddha had adopted. Or was the Buddha one of the "Eel-wrigglers" (*amarāvikkhepika*), who refused to adopt any position, either out of confusion or to avoid conflict (D i 24ff.)? And anything the Buddha said about the self would tend to be interpreted as representing one or another of the various theories that were available.

The Buddha insists, again and again, that all he is concerned with is suffering, its origin, its cessation and the way leading to its cessation. He has a limited and clearly defined goal, and he will not allow anyone to draw him into discussions which are not relevant to that goal. The nature of the self, it seems, is not relevant, except to the extent that it has a bearing on the *concern* with self, which is. So what he tries to show, again and again, is how the concern with self, and the futile attempt to identify this or that aspect of our personal existence with the self, leads inevitably to suffering. As to the nature of the self in itself, that is something which he deliberately leaves unexplained, since any discussion of it would tend to strengthen that concern with self, the sense of 'I am', which he has identified as the fundamental cause of suffering and rebirth.

By now it should be clear that the Buddha's "denial of self" is not as straightforward as it may at first have seemed. It is not a denial of the significance

of the first-person pronoun, nor a denial of specific theories about the self or even of all such theories in general; it seems to be a denial of the *usefulness* of the notion of self (beyond the obvious limits of practical discourse) in seeking an end to suffering and rebirth. What the Buddha offers is not so much a theory of non-self as a non-theory about self, a refusal to engage in the endless speculations about self which were current at the time.

And yet the self is central to the Buddha's philosophy. In the first place, it *is* the concern with self that generates our suffering; a great deal of the Buddha's teaching is meant to show us how to free ourselves from that concern. But in the second place, the Buddha urged his followers to rely upon themselves, not to expect freedom to be gained through anything but their own efforts.

> Therefore, Ānanda, live with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as refuge, with nothing else for refuge, with Dhamma for island, with Dhamma for refuge, with nothing else for refuge. (D ii 100)

Or as it is said in the *Dhammapada*:

> Self is the protector of self. What other protector could there be?
> With a self well tamed, one obtains a protector hard to obtain. (DP 160)

And the Buddha occasionally speaks as if there might after all be a self to be attained or realized. The Vinaya tells us of a group of young men pursuing a courtesan who has run away with some of their possessions. When they come upon the Buddha, they ask him if he has seen a woman. He replies,

> Now what do you think, young men? Which would be better for you, to seek a woman or to seek the self?
> This would be better for us, sir, to seek the self.
> Then be seated, young men. I will teach you the Dhamma.
> (MV 1.14.3)

He proceeds to teach them, though apparently without any further reference to the self. There is certainly no need to take this as indicating the kind of ultimate self that we find in the Upanishads, but it does suggest that inquiry into the self is what is needed, and it is at least open to the interpretation that there really is a self to be sought. And in the *Saṃyuttanikāya* the Buddha speaks of the person, the *pudgala*, as the bearer of the burden of the five aggregates:

> What, monks, is the burden? "The five aggregates of appropriation," it should be replied. What are the five? The aggregate of appropriation of physical form, the aggregate of appropriation of feeling, the aggregate of appropriation of perception, the aggregate of appropriation of mental forces, and the aggregate of appropriation of consciousness. This, monks, is called the burden.
>
> And what, monks, is the bearer of the burden? "The person," it should be replied, "that venerable one of such and such a name, and of such and such a clan." This, monks, is called the bearer of the burden. (S iii 25)

"*Bhāra-hāra*" (burden-bearer) *can* be interpreted as "bearing the burden" or "taking the burden", but in the context of the analogy it seems to refer most naturally to the one who bears the burden,[5] and so suggests that there is in fact a person, presumably a self in some sense, who is not the same as the five aggregates and who takes them up in each successive life and is at last free of them in Parinirvana.

In view of the subtlety of the Buddha's approach to the question of self, it is not surprising that in the centuries following his death there came to be divergent interpretations of this as of other aspects of his teaching. The majority held that the Buddha quite simply denied the reality of the self, and that all theories of self lead to suffering precisely because they misinterpret a reality in which no such thing as a self exists. In their view, the self exists only by convention, as a convenient way of speaking; what we call the self is in reality simply the five aggregates. As Vasubandhu says, "If the mere aggregates are spoken of figuratively as a self, that [self] we do not deny" (AKB 3.18a; DS ed. 432). But a significant minority held that the Buddha taught that there is a real person, indeterminate in relation to the five aggregates, whose nature is thus inexpressible. These were the Pudgalavādins.[6]

[5] Collins (1982:165) seems to suggest that the Pali (or Sanskrit) can *only* mean "the bearing of the burden". But as Collins recognizes, '*hāra*' can be adjectival, and of course the compound '*bhārahāra*' could be adjectival even if its final element could not. The adjectival compound can then be used nominally to mean "the one who is bearing the burden", which is equivalent to "the bearer of the burden".

[6] The Pudgalavādins were a minority within the whole Buddhist community, but as we shall see, they were at one time, at least, a majority of the *saṃgha* outside of the Mahāyāna.

Chapter 2

The Development of the Pudgalavāda

FROM the beginning there were various movements and currents within the Buddhist community. The first followers of the Buddha were individuals from a variety of backgrounds who would naturally understand his teaching according to their particular perspectives, giving more or less emphasis to this or that aspect of the doctrine. Their pupils in turn would tend to understand and develop the doctrine in ways characteristic of their teacher's outlook. None of them would have the intention of altering any part of the teaching of the Buddha, but divergent traditions of interpretation would nevertheless develop. As Buddhism gradually spread through India, local communities of monks, relatively isolated from one another, would come to be dominated by this or that tradition of interpretation. And the traditions of interpretation would be influenced in turn by the particular concerns of the monks who favoured them; specialists in the monastic discipline (*vinaya*), for example, would have a different perspective from those who specialized in the recitation and study of the sutras, or in the practice of meditation. There was no central authority to rule on questions of doctrine; each local community of monks was autonomous, and so there was nothing to prevent a wide variety of traditions, all of them claiming to represent the original teaching of the Buddha.

But these communities were not absolutely isolated, and as monks travelled from one area to another, there must have been a gradual exchange of views and insights, and occasional confrontations between monks whose traditions of interpretation had diverged so far as to seem irreconcilable. Some of these confrontations were important enough to form the basis for a division of the Buddhist community into schools; the earliest, probably in the second century after the Buddha's Parinirvana,[1] was that between the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Sthaviras over the nature and limitations of an Arhat. About sixty years later, the first of the Pudgalavādin schools, the Vātsīputrīyas, separated from the

[1] The date of the Parinirvana is still uncertain. For several decades, 486 BCE (or some date close to it) was widely accepted, but recent studies favour a later date, around 397 (Sarao) or 368 (Bechert). See Bareau (1953), Bechert (1982, 1986) and Sarao (1989). The dates relative to the Parinirvana at which the various schools arose are likewise unclear; there are significant discrepancies among the early accounts of the development of the schools. Some of these discrepancies may be the result, as Tāranātha suggests (34.8–10; 1981: 70), of an ambiguity in the unit of time; in fact the Sanskrit '*samā*' can mean either a year or a half-year, and this might account for the several cases in which the intervals of time appear to be twice as long in one account as in another.

Sthaviras. From the Vātsīputrīyas, four other Pudgalavādin schools emerged: the Dharmottarīyas, the Bhadrayānīyas, the Sāṃmitīyas and the Ṣaṇṇagarikas. The first two of these were evidently grouped together as the Mahāgiriyas (Bareau, 1955: 127f.). We are told that in the seventh century CE the Sāṃmitīyas divided into the Avantakas and the Kaurukulakas (Bareau, 1955: 121f.).

In the meantime, new schools were emerging from the non-Pudgalavādin traditions: the Ekavyāvahārikas, Lokottaravādins and Gokulikas from the Mahāsāṃghikas, the Bahuśrutīyas and Prajñaptivādins from the Gokulikas, and later the Caitikas from the Mahāsāṃghikas, and from the Caitikas, the Pūrvaśailas, Aparaśailas, Rājagirikas and Siddhārthikas; from the Sthaviras, the Sarvāstivādins, Kāśyapīyas, Mahīśāsakas and Haimavatas, the Dharmaguptakas from the Mahīśāsakas, and the Sautrāntikas or Saṃkrāntivādins from the Sarvāstivādins; and in the Theravāda (the Sthaviras of Sri Lanka), the Mahāvihāravāsins, the Abhayagirivāsins and the Jetavanīyas. The Mahāyāna seems to have arisen, as a movement rather than as a distinct school, among some of the offshoots of the Mahāsāṃghikas, perhaps as early as the first century BCE.[2]

At least two of the Pudgalavādin schools, the Vātsīputrīyas and the Kaurukulaka branch of the Sāṃmitīyas, survived into the tenth century CE (Bareau, 1955: 115, 126). The Pudgalavāda lasted, then, from about two centuries after the death of the Buddha until the time when Buddhism finally disappeared in India, a period of well over a millennium. The Sāṃmitīyas became the largest of the non-Mahāyāna schools. When the great Chinese monk Xúanzàng (玄藏)[3] travelled through India in the seventh century CE, he found 66,000 monks of the Sāṃmitīya in over a thousand monasteries, distributed throughout the Indus and Ganges basins and in the land between, but concentrated especially in the west; this represented about half of the monks in the Early Schools and (since there were roughly as many monks in the Early Schools taken together as in the Mahāyāna) a quarter of the total population of Buddhist monks in India (Lamotte, 1958: 599–601). Later in the same century, Yìjìng (義淨)[4] reported that there were many Sāṃmitīyas also in Champa (South Vietnam) and some in Java and Sumatra (Bareau, 1955: 39). But as the main strength of the Pudgalavāda remained within the Indian subcontinent, the extinction of Buddhism in India also marked the end of the Pudgalavāda.

2 Our sources vary considerably in their accounts of the development of the schools. I follow Bareau (1955: 30–34) in his reconstruction of how they actually developed.

3 Hsüan-tsang.

4 I-ching.

The origins of the Pudgalavāda (as of the other schools of Buddhism) are obscure. In his commentary on Vasumitra's account of the development of the schools, Xuánzàng's disciple Kuījī (窺基)[5] says:

> In the days of the Buddha there was a *tīrthika*, Vātsīputra (犢子 Dúzǐ), who resorted to the Buddha and went forth, as is told in the [*Mahā-pari*]*nirvāṇasūtra*. Since then, his disciples have handed down [his teachings] without interruption until the present, and their school is named, in accordance with their distant inheritance, the Vātsīputrīya School. Hence the annotation on the Vātsīputrīya School in the *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchāsūtra*: "founder's surname".[6] The Dharma Master Paramārtha (真諦 Zhēndì) says that according to the school of the disciples of Vatsyaputra (可住子 Kězhùzǐ) Rāhula was the disciple of Śāriputra and Vatsyaputra (皤雌子 Bócízǐ) was the disciple of Rāhula; he disseminated the teachings of Śāriputra. (YZLS 0439b)

In Bhavya's *Tarkajvālā* there is an account (apparently Sāṃmitīya in origin)[7] of the formation of the schools[8] which mentions a "recitation and compilation"[9] of the teaching by a Sthavira Vatsīputra two hundred years after the Parinirvana and after the split between the Sthaviras and the Mahāsāṃghikas (P5256, 67c3; P5640, 254a4).[10] A similar account, also from a Sāṃmitīya source, appears in Daśabalaśrīmitra's *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya*, although there the recitation and compilation is supposed to have been four hundred years after the Parinirvana (P5865, 15b1–3).[11] This "recitation and compilation" no doubt represents the appearance of the Vātsīputrīyas as a distinct school. But if what these accounts assert is that the school was founded by a monk named Vātsīputra who lived two hundred years or more after the time of the Buddha, how is this to be reconciled with Kuījī's account? Was Kuījī mistaken in believing that Vātsīputra was a contemporary of the Buddha? Or might there have been another monk who was named Vātsīputra (or Vatsyaputra), perhaps after the founder of the tradition? The most likely explanation is perhaps that these accounts merely state that the

5 K'uei-chi.

6 T468, 501b16; T2032, 17c14. As Demiéville notes (1932: 58, n. c), "律主 *lǜzhǔ*" does not mean "master of Vinaya" here, but is simply the term used in this text for the head or founder of a school.

7 According to Tāranātha (206.19–207.5; 1981: 340).

8 P5256, 66d–69e, and separately as P5640.

9 This is the expression adopted by Peter Skilling (1982: 50, n. 10) to represent the Tibetan '*yaṅ dag par bsdu ba mdzad*' and its Sanskrit equivalent, '*saṃ-gai*' or '*saṃgīti-kṛ*'.

10 Translated by Bareau, 1956: 173.

11 Translated by Skilling, 1982: 40f.

teaching of Vātsīputra, who might have lived much earlier, was recited and compiled at this time, not that (another) Vātsīputra recited and compiled it. The Tibetan permits such an interpretation,[12] and that in fact is how Bareau (though not Skilling) understands it.

Tāranātha, the seventeenth-century Tibetan scholar, tells of a monk in Kaśmīra at the time of the Emperor Aśoka (the middle of the third century BCE) whose name Schiefner interprets as "Vatsa". He is supposed to have been a Brahman by birth, a learned but evil man, who taught the reality of the self and caused controversies in the Buddhist community. He was eventually converted to the true doctrine by a monk named Kṛṣṇa.[13] Here again we have a monk with a name reminiscent of Vātsīputra teaching the reality of the self at about the time when the Vātsīputrīyas became a distinct school. But his association with Kaśmīra may be anachronistic, for it was under Aśoka that Buddhism is supposed to have been first brought to Kaśmīra (Warder, 1980: 265); and his conversion to orthodoxy has the ring of legend.

Finally, the biography of Xuánzàng (T2053, 234c7f.) speaks of an Arhat named Gopa (瞿波 Qūbō) who wrote a treatise affirming the reality of the self and the person (我人 *wǒrén*) and says that it was in response to this treatise that the Sarvāstivādin monk Devaśarman wrote his *Vijñānakāya*, which in fact contains a refutation of the Pudgalavāda. Gopa's treatise has unfortunately not survived. Devaśarman is thought to have written the *Vijñānakāya* a little after 200 BCE (Warder, 1980: 343), which would be within a century of the appearance of the Vātsīputrīyas as a distinct school. The biography indicates that Gopa and Devaśarman lived in the same monastery, near Viśoka (in the vicinity of Lucknow). Although he was evidently a figure comparable to Devaśarman in importance, Gopa is not known from any other source.

What emerges from all this is none too clear. The Vātsīputrīyas traced their lineage back to someone named Vātsīputra or Vatsyaputra who (according to Kuījī) was a contemporary of the Buddha. The formation of the Vātsīputrīyas as a distinct school is again associated with a monk named Vātsīputra, who may be the real founder of the tradition, projected back by the defenders of the Pudgalavāda to create the illusion of an earlier Vātsīputra at the time of the

12 Bhavya: "*gnas brtan gnas ma'i bus bstan pa yaṅ dag par bsdus so*." Daśabalaśrīmitra: "*gnas ma bu pa' ra pa' dzi su tras sde pa gcig gis chos bsdus so.*" Skilling suggests, no doubt correctly, that "*pa' dzi su tras*" is a corrupted transcription of 'Vātsīputra'; for "*pa' ra*", he suggests '*vara*' (1982: 50, n. 12). That the Tibetan instrumental can represent a genitive in the Sanskrit is clear, for example, from a sentence in Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*, "*iha hi bhagavatām buddhānām satyadvayam āśritya dharmadeśanā pravartate*" (PPMV 492.6), which in the Tibetan becomes: "*'di na saṅs rgyas bcom ldan 'das rnams kyis chos bstan pa ni bden pa gñis la brten nas 'jug go*" (May, 1959: 432.5f.).

13 Tāranātha, 35.17-36.4; translated by Lama Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, 1981: 71 f.

Buddha, or who may be a monk bearing the same name as the disciple of Rāhula, who made a definitive recitation and compilation of the tradition which he had inherited from his namesake, or who may rather be the disciple of Rāhula himself as the source of the teaching which was later recited and compiled. The "Vatsa" described by Tāranātha may represent a distorted memory of this same Vātsīputra, or may be another Vātsīputrīya with a name similar to that of the founder of the school. Gopa is presumably a different person, another early Vātsīputrīya; but it is curious to note that a synonym of '*gopa*' (which means a cowherd) is '*vatsīya*'.

Could the Vātsīputra whom the Vātsīputrīyas claimed as the originator of their doctrine have been the wanderer Vacchagotta, whose confusion concerning the status of the Tathāgata after death we have already seen? The name 'Vacchagotta' (which of course is Pali) appears in its Sanskrit form in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* as 'Vatsasagotra', meaning "of the same clan as Vatsa", and 'Vātsya', which is simply a patronymic from 'Vatsa' (AKB 9; DS ed. 1210.19, 1214.3). Vacchagotta or Vātsya was a follower of a non-Buddhist philosophy and was fascinated by the question of whether the Tathāgata exists after death or not. His request to become a lay-disciple of the Buddha is recorded at the end of the *Aggivacchagottasutta* (M i 489), and in the *Mahāvacchagottasutta* he receives ordination (M i 494) and subsequently attains Nirvana and becomes an Arhat (M i 496). With his particular interest in the nature of the Tathāgata after Parinirvana, he might be expected to have had a distinctive understanding of the Buddha's teaching concerning the person, and so to have begun a tradition which would eventually emerge as the Pudgalavāda. Even if in fact he had no connection with the Pudgalavāda, his name, his interest in the nature of the Tathāgata, and his evident importance in the sutras might have made him the obvious choice if the Vātsīputrīyas were looking for someone among the ancient Arhats from whom they could claim spiritual descent. The actual founder of the school would then have been a monk whose name was Vātsī- or Vatsyaputra, or perhaps someone whose own name is lost (unless it was Gopa) and whose distinctive teaching was ascribed to the Vātsya or Vātsīputra who was known to have been a disciple of the Buddha. The monk named Vatsa in Tāranātha's account may have been the same person, but it is certainly not impossible that there was some other Pudgalavādin who was a member of the same *gotra*.

According to Kuījī, Vātsīputra's admission into the community of monks is recorded in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. But no one with a name like Vātsīputra (or Vacchagotta) appears in the Pali *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, or in any of the other

early versions of the sutra that have survived. If Vātsīputra was (or was claimed to be) Vacchagotta, why did Kuījī say that it was the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* that recorded his admission into the community? If Kuījī had been talking about Vacchagotta, surely he would have referred to the sutras which actually record his discussions with the Buddha. But Kuījī was a Mahāyānist, and although we turn as a matter of course to the earlier, pre-Mahāyāna versions of the sutra to look for evidence of a Vātsīputra at the time of the Buddha, he would naturally refer to the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. There in fact we find Vātsīputra (犢子 Dúzǐ) at two points in the text, once mentioned by the Buddha in passing (T374, 566c10; T375, 813b2), and once in an actual dialogue with the Buddha (T374, 597b23–598b15; T375, 845c6–846b28);[14] the dialogue is that contained in the Pali *Mahāvacchagottasutta*, and it includes an account of Vātsīputra's ordination and his becoming an Arhat. Clearly there was a tradition which identified Vacchagotta and Vātsīputra.

Further evidence is afforded by the Chinese translations of the various Vacchagotta sutras. Almost all of these are in a single section of the *Saṃyuktāgama* (which corresponds to the Pali *Saṃyuttanikāya*). There are two Chinese translations of the *Saṃyuktāgama*. In one of them (T99, 244a9–247c13), Vacchagotta is called "the wanderer Vatsagotra (婆蹉種出家 Pócuōzhǒng chūjiā)"; in the other (T100, 443a9–447b8), he is "the *brahmacarin* Vātsīputra (犢子梵志 Dúzǐ fànzhì)", precisely as in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. In fact the last sutra in the section, which corresponds to the Pali *Mahāvacchagottasutta*, is virtually identical with the dialogue in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.

The occurrence of 'Vātsīputra' for 'Vatsagotra' in one of the recensions of the *Saṃyuktāgama* does not prove that Vatsagotra (Vacchagotta) was also called Vātsīputra. It is certainly possible that 'Vātsīputra' is simply another variant of the name, like 'Vatsasagotra' and 'Vātsya'; but it is also possible that the name was modified in this recension in order to provide a respectable ancestor for a tradition that was under attack. (If we could be *sure* that this was the case, we could identify the recension as belonging to the Vātsīputrīya.) In either case, it would have been the Vātsīputrīya's claim that their tradition had the authority of Vatsagotra, also called Vātsīputra, who was ordained during the lifetime of the Buddha and became an Arhat. If two centuries later there was in fact another monk named Vātsīputra who was responsible for the formation of the

[14] In the Tibetan translation, his name appears as "Be'u", which would correspond to 'Vatsa', not 'Vātsīputra'. See P787 (in vol. 31), 87e2 and 123a6–124a5. But according to Fujii (1993: 27), P787 is actually a translation from the Chinese (T374 and T377), not from the original Sanskrit.

Vātsīputrīyas as a distinct school, that would of course make no difference to the authenticity of their tradition.

Even less is known about the rise of the other Pudgalavādin schools. Three of them, the Dharmottarīya, the Bhadrayāṇīya and the Sāṃmitīya (or Sāṃmatīya), were apparently named after their founders (or spiritual progenitors), Dharmottara, Bhadra and Saṃmata respectively (Bareau, 1955: 121, 127f.). The names of the fourth, the Ṣaṇnagarika (or Ṣaṇḍagiriya), and of the two schools deriving from the Sāmmitīya, the Avantaka and the Kaurukulaka, represented the localities where these schools originated or at least flourished (Bareau, 1955: 122, 130); they give us no information about who was involved in their creation.[15]

According to Vasumitra, the Dharmottarīyas, Bhadrayāṇīyas, Sāṃmitīyas and Ṣaṇnagarikas differed over the interpretation of a single verse, which concerned the various levels of attainment in the Buddhist Path (P5639, 252e6; T2031, 16c24f.; T2033, 22a14f.).[16] The Tibetan and Chinese versions diverge considerably, and so the precise meaning of the verse, no doubt obscure even in the original, remains difficult to determine. We may translate it roughly as follows:

> They have achieved release; they decline again;
> through passion they decline; they again return;
> joy will be gained in what is dear [to them];
> they become happy following happiness.

Kuījī gives us an account of the four different interpretations of this verse (YZLS, 0460a18–b9). The Dharmottarīyas and Bhadrayāṇīyas divide it into three sections, with the first two *pādas* (half-lines) as the first section, the third *pāda* as the second, and the fourth *pāda* as the third. The Dharmottarīyas understand the verse to refer to three types of Arhat. The first two *pādas* refer to the Arhat who declines (the Pudgalavādins, like the Sarvāstivādins, holding that an Arhat can regress to a lower level); the third *pāda* refers to the Arhat who is stable, and the fourth *pāda*, to the Arhat who advances. The Bhadrayāṇīyas take it to refer to the Three Vehicles of the *aśaikṣas* (those who no longer require training). The first two *pādas* refer to the Arhat; the third *pāda* refers to the Pratyekabuddha, and the fourth *pāda*, to the Buddha. The Sāṃmitīyas and Ṣaṇnagarikas divide the verse into six sections, with four sections in the first two

15 The variations in some of the names no doubt result from differing Sanskritizations of the original Prakrit.

16 The translation in T2032, 19b10f., is incomplete and evidently corrupt.

pādas, each *pāda* being divided into two, the third *pāda* as the fifth section, and the fourth *pāda* as the sixth. The Sāṃmitīyas take it to refer to six of the Noble Persons (*āryapudgala*). "They have achieved release" refers to the Stream-winner (*srotaāpanna*), who will be reborn no more than seven times. "They decline again" refers to the Family-to-family Person (*kulaṅkula*), who according to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB 6.34cd; DS ed. 944.7) is a Stream-winner with only two or three births remaining. "Through passion they decline" refers to the Single-interval Person (*ekavīcika*), who has only one birth remaining (AKB 6.36a–c; DS ed. 946). "They again return" refers to the Once-returner (*sakṛdāgāmin*), who after living as a god will be born only once more as a human being (AKB 6.35cd; DS ed. 946). The third *pāda* refers to the Non-returner (*anāgāmin*), and the fourth *pāda*, to the Arhat. The Ṣaṇnagarikas take it to refer to the six types of *aśaikṣa* (or Arhat) which are described in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB 6.56ff.; DS ed. 988ff.). "They have achieved release" refers to the one who considers (*cetanādharman*), who thinks of committing suicide, like Godhika (S i 120f.), to avoid regression. "They decline again" refers to the one who may regress (*parihāṇadharman*) from arhathood. "Through passion they decline" refers to the one who guards (*anurakṣaṇādharman*) what he has gained. "They again return" refers to the one who is stable (*sthitākampya*). The third *pāda* refers to the one who is able to penetrate (*prativedhanābhavya*) to immovability. The fourth *pāda* refers to the one who is immovable (*akopyadharman*), who is incapable of regression.

Finally, we need to note that certain other schools have occasionally been identified as *pudgalavādin*, affirming the reality of the person. Vasumitra says in his account of the development and doctrines of the schools (P5639, 252e6)[17] that the Sautrāntikas taught the existence of an "ultimately real person" (*paramārthapudgala*). In his commentary on Vasumitra's account, Kuījī distinguishes this doctrine from that of the Pudgalavādins:

> They hold that there is the *paramārthapudgala*, but it is subtle and difficult to conceive; it is the real self. It is not the same as [the *pudgala* of] the Sāṃmitīyas and so on, which is neither identical with the aggregates nor separate from them. (YZLS, 0466a2f.)

In the first part of Bhavya's account in his *Tarkajvālā* (P5256, 67a5; P5640, 253d2), it is stated that some of the Uttarīyas maintained that "the *pudgala* transmigrates from this world to another world" and were accordingly known as

[17] T2031, 17b5; T2032, 19c12; T2033, 22b22f.

Saṃkrāntivādins, "Transmigrationists". In the third part of the same work, we are told that the Original Sthaviras (Pūrvasthaviras) held that the *pudgala* exists (P5256, 67e5; P5640, 254d2) and that the Haimavatas regarded the *pudgala* as different from the five aggregates, on the grounds that the *pudgala* continues to exist in Nirvana even after the aggregates have passed away (P5256, 67e6; P5640, 254d4). And Vinītadeva says in his account (P5641, 258b1) that one of the doctrines of the Vibhajyavādins was that the *pudgala* exists as something real (*paramārtha*).

Bareau is inclined to set aside these statements. He notes that Bhavya ascribes to the Saṃkrāntivādins, who are generally identified with the Sautrāntikas, the view that the *pudgala* is not apprehended as something real (P5256, 68c3; P5640, 255b7), and concludes that Vasumitra and Kuījī were mistaken:

> Although Vasumitra affirms the contrary, it is here Bhavya who must be right. The *pudgalavādin* doctrine is in fact well known, but it is always attributed to the Vātsīputrīyas and Sammatīyas, and never to the Sautrāntikas. Yet these were very well known to the Sarvāstivādins. If they had actually held this opinion, as Vasumitra supposes, Vasubandhu and Saṃghabhadra on the one hand and the *Vibhāṣā* on the other would not have failed to make this known to us in the long passages in which they denounce the *pudgalavāda*, attributing it expressly to the Vātsīputrīyas, as do also the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Satyasiddhiśāstra*. (Bareau, 1955: 156)[18]

He points out, moreover, that the third part of Bhavya's account, in which the Pūrvasthaviras and the Haimavatas are said to have accepted the reality of the *pudgala*, is believed to be Sāṃmitīya in origin. He suggests that the ascription of the *pudgalavāda* to these two schools merely represents an attempt on the part of the Sāṃmitīyas to legitimize their doctrine (Bareau, 1956: 177, n. 3; 178, n. 1). These were schools closely connected, according to the Sāṃmitīya account, at least, with the original community of monks, and in the *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchāsūtra* (T468, 501b15; T2032, 17c13), the Vātsīputrīyas are actually represented as arising from the Haimavatas. If the *pudgalavāda* was not to be regarded as a later innovation, it would have to have been maintained (or assumed) by at least some of the early Sthaviras from whom both the Haimavatas and the several Pudgalavādin schools were descended.

[18] Original in French.

It is certainly strange, if the Sautrāntikas were indeed *pudgalavādins*, that Vasubandhu, Saṅghabhadra and the *Mahāvibhāṣā* say nothing about it. But it is not strictly true that Vasumitra is the only writer to ascribe this doctrine to the Sautrāntikas. The Uttarīyas mentioned in the first part of Bhavya's account are in fact Sautrāntikas (Bareau, 1955: 155), and the Saṃkrāntivādins, who according to this account were a group within the Uttarīya school who maintained that the *pudgala* transmigrates, are likewise to be identified with the Sautrāntikas. Moreover, Vinītadeva says that according to the Saṃkrāntivādins the sentient being (*sems can*, *sattva*) transmigrates; if the sentient being can be identified with the *pudgala*, we have another source which ascribes something like the *pudgalavāda* to the Sautrāntikas. It is even conceivable that the Vibhajyavādins to whom Vinītadeva ascribes the doctrine that the *pudgala* is *paramārtha* may also have been Sautrāntikas. 'Vibhajyavāda' seems not to have been the name of a specific school, but to have been used for any group within one of the schools which dissented from the rest on some point of doctrine. The Uttarīyas who in Bhavya's account affirmed the *pudgala* would thus have been Vibhajyavādins among the Uttarīyas; that is to say, they would have been dissenting Sautrāntikas. Vinītadeva's Vibhajyavādins may in this case have been Saṃkrāntivādins (and thus Sautrāntikas) distinguished from those who merely affirmed the transmigration of the sentient being by their explicit assertion that the *pudgala* is ultimately real. (The Vibhajyavādins would thus have been dissenters from the dissenting Sautrāntikas.) But of course it is also entirely possible that these were dissenters from some other school which normally denied the reality of the *pudgala*.

There is a good deal of evidence, then, that at least some of the Sautrāntikas were in some sense *pudgalavādins*. Vasumitra was himself a Sarvāstivādin and so ought to have been well informed about the Sautrāntikas, and Kuījī, whose opinion in these matters no doubt reflects Xuánzàng's, expresses no disagreement with Vasumitra's testimony, and in fact gives us further information, indicating how the Sautrāntikas' conception of the *pudgala* differed from the Sāṃmitīyas'. The first part of Bhavya's account, which according to Bareau is also Sarvāstivādin in provenance, seems to confirm Vasumitra's, and explains how there might have come to be conflicting reports concerning the Sautrāntikas' position: it was only some of the Uttarīyas (i.e. Sautrāntikas) that held that the *pudgala* transmigrates and were accordingly called Saṃkrāntivādins. Vinītadeva similarly informs us that according to the Saṃkrāntivādins the sentient being (*sattva*) transmigrates, the *sattva* being presumably equivalent to the *pudgala*. We may suppose, then, that when

Vasubandhu and Saṅghabhadra spoke of the Sautrāntikas, it was the main group of the Sautrāntikas that they had in mind, whereas Vasumitra, in giving a survey of the doctrines of the schools, thought it necessary to mention the *paramārthapudgala* as a distinctive doctrine, even though it was probably not held by the majority of Sautrāntikas.

We should note, however, that to affirm that the *pudgala* (or *sattva*) transmigrates is not necessarily to affirm its ultimate reality. The third part of Bhavya's account (which appears to be originally Sāṃmitīya) says that the Saṃkrāntivādins held that "the five aggregates transmigrate from this world to another world" (P5256, 68c2; P5640, 255b6). The phrasing is exactly as in the first part of Bhavya's account, except that there it is the *pudgala* that transmigrates. If the *pudgala* were understood to be the five aggregates taken together for convenience, it would be quite natural to speak of the transmigration of the five aggregates as the transmigration of the *pudgala*. It is possible, then, that some of the Saṃkrāntivādins were *pudgalavādin* only in this limited sense, that they held that the five aggregates which they thought of as constituting the *pudgala* transmigrate from one world to another. But other Saṃkrāntivādins may certainly have maintained that the *pudgala* is *paramārtha*, ultimately real.

What about the claim in the third part of Bhavya's account that the Pūrvasthaviras and Haimavatas were *pudgalavādin*? As Bareau suggests, it is no doubt significant that this claim appears in the part of Bhavya's account which derives from the Sāṃmitīya. The Sāṃmitīyas, like all of the other schools of Buddhism, would have to believe that their doctrines could be traced, at least in principle, to the Buddha himself, and so ought to have been held by at least some of the monks of the early community, before the formation of the schools, and by at least some of the monks in whatever schools existed before the appearance of the Vātsīputrīyas and Sāṃmitīyas. The Sāṃmitīyas thus had a strong motive for revising the early history of Buddhism in order to show that their doctrine of the *pudgala* was an ancient one, transmitted within the community of monks from the time of the Buddha, and not something recently created by monks unable to understand or accept the true teaching.

But there are two points to be made here. One is that the doctrine ascribed to the Haimavatas is that the *pudgala* is different from the five aggregates because it still exists in Nirvana after the aggregates have passed away.This is not the doctrine of the Vātsīputrīyas and Sāṃmitīyas, according to whom the *pudgala* is neither identical with the five aggregates nor different from them. If the Sāṃmitīyas wanted to claim other schools as *pudgalavādin* in order to give an appearance of legitimacy to their own doctrine, it would surely have been natural

for them to ascribe what they understood to be the correct form of their doctrine to those other schools. Moreover, there is a passage in one of our few Pudgalavādin sources, the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyśāstra*, in which an argument very similar to this one appears in support of the position of (unnamed) schools other than the Sāṃmitīya:

> In the opinion of these schools, the Buddha spoke of attaining the unshakeable happiness (無動樂 *wúdòng lè*)[19] [in Parinirvana] and so the person is eternal. Since the person attains the unshakeable happiness and has no aggregates, the person dwells beyond the possibility of knowledge; therefore the person is eternal. (T1649, 463c23f.)

The Haimavatas are represented as arguing that the *pudgala* is different from the aggregates on the grounds that the *pudgala* still exists in Nirvana after the aggregates have passed away; the schools here are represented as arguing that the *pudgala* is eternal on the same grounds. Obviously if the *pudgala* continues to exist after Parinirvana in the absence of the aggregates, the *pudgala* is different from the aggregates, and in fact could not be eternal if it were not different from them. The position of the Pudgalavāda (certainly of the Vātsīputrīyas and Sāṃmitīyas, and apparently of the other Pudgalavādin schools as well) is that the *pudgala* is neither eternal nor subject to annihilation, since it is neither the same as the aggregates nor different from them. The author of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* was evidently aware of schools which, unlike the Pudgalavādins, held that the *pudgala* is different from the aggregates and is eternal. It is surely possible that one of these schools, *pudgalavādin* though not included in the Pudgalavāda, was the Haimavata.

The second point is that we have a natural tendency to regard the views of the Pudgalavādins as anomalous, and to be accordingly suspicious of any account of the development of the schools which tends to legitimize their position and which can be traced to a Pudgalavādin source. I am not suggesting that our suspicion is out of place; a reasonable degree of suspicion is surely appropriate for any historical investigation. But we have to remember that the other schools also had doctrines whose legitimacy had to be established, and that they also had a motive for revising the history of Buddhism to agree more closely with what they believed the facts had to have been. We have to be somewhat suspicious, then, of all of our sources; otherwise we are in the position of assuming that we already know what the Buddha taught and how he was understood by the early

19 This represents '*acalaṃ sukhaṃ*', as in *Udāna* 8.10 (U 93).

community of monks. But that of course is what we do not know. And whatever guesses we make about it ought to be based on all of the traditions of Buddhism, not simply those with which we happen to be familiar. If we take seriously the possibility that the Buddha actually taught some form of *pudgalavāda*, or at any rate expressed himself in ways which left open the possibility of such an interpretation, then there is of course nothing inherently improbable in the idea that a number of schools, even from a very early period, should have affirmed the reality of the person. The Sāṃmitīyas may have ascribed to the Pūrvasthaviras and Haimavatas the doctrines which they thought they ought to have held, or perhaps rather, which they were convinced that they must have held; but it is also possible that they ascribed to these primitive schools the doctrines which they actually *did* hold, and which the non-Pudgalavādin schools, if they knew about them at all, regarded as embarrassing and no doubt temporary aberrations.

On the whole, then, the evidence suggests that there were indeed other schools besides those we identify as the Pudgalavādins which affirmed the reality of the person. But if the resources for an investigation of the Vātsīputrīyas and Sāṃmitīyas (not to mention the other Pudgalavādin schools) are meagre, those for investigating these non-Pudgalavādin *pudgalavādins*, of whose very existence we cannot be certain, are all but non-existent. Our present inquiry, then, will of necessity be limited to the Pudgalavāda, or rather (to speak realistically) to the Vātsīputrīyas and Sāṃmitīyas.

As we have noted, the doctrine of the Pudgalavāda was not simply an affirmation of the reality of the person. What the Pudgalavādins affirmed was that the person really exists *and* is indeterminate; it is neither the same as the five aggregates nor different from them. What does this mean? Is the person a relatively distinct entity which can be known only through what appear to be its constituents? Or is the person simply its constituents themselves spoken of (or conceived) as an entity constituted by them? We need to find out, if we can, precisely how the Pudgalavādins understood their doctrine, and we need to consider also how the doctrine may have changed during the thousand and more years of the Pudgalavāda's existence. But before advancing to this task, we have first to consider the sources that have come down to us, the evidence upon which our interpretation of the Pudgalavāda will have to be based.

Chapter 3

Sources

THE sources for our study of the Pudgalavādin doctrine of the self can be grouped under three headings: first, surviving literature of the Pudgalavādin schools; second, summaries of their doctrines in the various accounts of the formation of the schools; and third, polemical works in which Pudgalavādin doctrines are presented for refutation. Other things being equal, the first of these are obviously the most reliable, and the third, least. But the few original works that we possess have come down to us only in translation, whereas some of the polemical material has survived in Pali or Sanskrit. There may be cases, then, in which a source in the third category gives us clear information about something which is obscure or unrecognizable in the translations of the original works.

The Pudgalavādins must have produced a large literature, including their own version of the Tripiṭaka. They are said to have had an Abhidharma in nine parts[1] called the *Śāriputrābhidharma* (舍利弗阿毘曇 *Shèlìfú ēpítán*)[2] or *Dharmalakṣaṇābhidharma* (法相毘曇 *Fǎxiàng pítán*),[3] but although there is a Chinese translation of a work called *Śāriputrābhidharma* (T1548), it is arranged in four sections and is clearly not Pudgalavādin (Lamotte, 1958: 209). According to his biography, Xuánzàng brought fifteen works of the Sāṃmitīya school back with him to China (T2053, 252c7); unfortunately none of them has survived. We know the titles[4] of three Sāṃmitīya works which Xuánzàng studied in India (T2053, 244a1f.): the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyamūlābhidharma* (正量部根本阿毘達摩 *Zhèngliàngbù gēnběn ēpídámó*),[5] the *Saddharmasaṃgraha* (攝正法論 *Shè zhèng fǎ lùn*),[6] and the *Jiào shí lùn* (教實論). The last of these was presumably the *Shèngjiào yàoshí lùn* (聖教要實論 *Āryaśāsanasāra*)[7] of Gopa which affirmed the existence of the self and the person, and against which the refutation of the

1 Jízàng (吉藏), *Sān lùn xuán yì* (三論玄義), T1852, 9c8f.; tr. Demiéville, 1932: 57. This seems to be our only evidence for the nine-part structure of the Abhidharma of the Vātsīputrīyas.

2 *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, T1509, 70a19f.; tr. Lamotte, 1944: 1.112.

3 T1852, 9c8.

4 The Sanskrit titles of works which have survived only in Chinese translations are normally no more than plausible reconstructions. Perhaps the only real justification for using them is that it reminds us that these are, in fact, Indian works, not compositions in Chinese.

5 "Basic Abhidharma of the Sāṃmitīya School."

6 "Compendium of the True Dharma."

7 "Essentials of the Noble Teaching."

pudgala in the *Vijñānakāya* (T1539) was apparently directed. The *Sāṃmitīya-nikāyamūlābhidharma* might conceivably be the work which has come down to us in a Chinese translation as the *Sānmídǐbù lùn* (*Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*), but its title seems to indicate a basic Abhidharma text of the school rather than a developed treatise such as the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*.

As far as we know at present, only three works have survived more or less intact out of the entire corpus of Pudgalavādin literature. One of these is the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* (T1649: 三彌底部論 *Sānmídǐbù lùn*) mentioned above. The others are a general survey of Buddhist doctrine, the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, surviving in two Chinese translations, the *Sānfǎdù lùn* (T1506: 三法度論)[8] and the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* (T1505: 四阿鋡暮抄解),[9] and a work on the Vinaya called the *Vinayadvāviṃśativyakti* (T1461: 律二十二明了論: *Lǜ èrshíèr míngliǎo lùn*).[10] By its nature, the last of these has nothing to offer on the subject of the person or self, and the two versions of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* deal with it only as one among many other matters to be explained; but the *Sāṃmitīya-nikāyaśāstra* gives us a long discussion of various theories about the self with an explanation of why the doctrine of the Sāṃmitīyas is the right one.

The real title of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* is reconstructed by Venkata-ramanan (1953: 212, n.1) as "*Āśrayaprajñapti*" (依說論 *Yīshuō lùn*: "The Treatise of the Concept According to the Basis");[11] this appears at the end of the work in accordance with the usual Indian practice. That "說 *shuō*" ("talk, explanation") is here equivalent to '*prajñapti*' or 'concept' seems clear from an annotation included in the text (T1649, 466b2): "說者亦名安亦名制亦名假名 *Shuō zhě yì míng àn yì míng zhì yì míng jiǎmíng*: '說 *shuō*' means 'arranging, ordering, conceiving' (or 'concept', or 'designation')." These are all meanings of '*prajñapti*'. The title of the translation, *Sānmídǐbù lùn* (*Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*), is rather a general indication of the nature of the work for the Chinese reader: "A Treatise of the Sāṃmitīya School".

The name of the work's author is unknown, and the date of its composition cannot be determined except within very wide limits: it will not have been earlier than the appearance of the Sāṃmitīya school in or around the second century BCE or later than the time of its translation into Chinese, perhaps around 400

8 "Treatise on the Three Divisions of *Dharmas*," or perhaps, "...on the Divisions of the Three [kinds of] *Dharmas*." The "divisions" are referred to in the text as "真度 *zhēndù*" (15c23, 18b19, etc.), which may represent '*khaṇḍa*', as suggested by Idzumi Hōkei in his article on the *Sānfǎdù lùn* in *Busshō kaisetsu daijiten* (110).

9 "Selections and Explanations from the Four *Āgamas*."

10 "Accomplishment (or Clarification) in Twenty-two [Verses] on Vinaya."

11 But see below, p. 72.

CE. The character of the work would suggest that it belongs to a period not too long before its translation, perhaps in the second or third century CE.

The *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* consists of an extended discussion of the person and the process of rebirth as understood by the Sāṃmitīyas. After a brief introduction, it presents seven theories concerning the nature of the self and explains the inadequacy of each of them, and then gives an account of three ways in which the person is to be conceived: according to its basis in the five aggregates, according to its transition from one existence to the next, and according to its disappearance in Parinirvana. The remainder of the work deals with a number of questions relating to rebirth: what actually passes from one existence to the next, whether the whole process of rebirth has a beginning, whether there is an intermediate state (*antarābhava*) between existences, what types of person there are, and what kinds of transition from one existence to another. For our purposes, it is the first part of the work, dealing with the self or person, that is of primary importance.

The name of the translator also is unknown. The translation is supposed to have been made in the period of the three Qín dynasties (352–431 CE), but it may in fact be earlier. It is not easy to read. At times it is literal to a degree that makes it very difficult to interpret; for example, the phrase "如是一切 *rú shì yíqiè*" means literally "like this all"; Venkataramanan translates it by "and so do all" (1953: 166, 185) and similar expressions. In its various contexts the phrase seems meaningless; but when we notice the frequent occurrence of "如是 *rú shì*" at the end of sentences and in particular as marking the end of quotations, we can recognize it as corresponding to the Sanskrit '*iti*', which (as many of my readers of course know) literally means "thus" but is used also to mark direct quotation or to create the equivalent of a noun clause. And then we can guess that "如是一切 *rú shì yíqiè*" represents something like '*iti vistaraḥ*', which means "and so on" at the end of a quoted passage.[12] Although this kind of mechanically literal rendering of the Sanskrit (or Prakrit) idiom naturally makes for obscurity, it also offers the possibility of a more exact reconstruction of the original text than is usually possible from a Chinese translation. But to distinguish the phrases which render the sense of the original from those which represent its actual wording is by no means easy. Moreover, there is evidence of corruption in the Chinese text.

The *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* consists of a very compressed summary of Buddhist doctrine and a commentary explaining the summary. The summary was evidently called the *Tridharmakhaṇḍakasūtra*, for Huì yuǎn (慧遠) refers to it as

12 In fact in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*'s critique of the Pudgalavāda we find "*iti sarvam*" (literally, "thus all") in the sense of '*iti vistaraḥ*' (AKB 9; DS ed. 1212.12).

the *Sānfǎdù jīng* (三法度經) in his preface (T2145, 73a2). It is a sutra not in the usual Buddhist sense of a discourse attributed to the Buddha or an authorized disciple, but in the sense of a collection of short statements in prose (*sūtras*) suitable for memorization, like the *Nyāyasūtra* and *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*. (There is also at least one other Buddhist work in this form, Nāgārjuna's *Vaidalyasūtra*.) In one of the Chinese translations, the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* (四阿鋡暮抄解), these statements are marked off from the commentary by the word "修妒路 *xiūdùlù*" (*sūtra*).

According to the preface (T1505, 1a5) and text of the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, the author of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍakasūtra* was an Arhat named Vasubhadra ("婆素跋陀 Pósùbátuó" in the Chinese transcription). Dàoān (道安) translates this as "今賢 Jīnxián" in his annotations to the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* (T1505, 4a12); Huìyuǎn gives the name as "山賢 Shānxián" in his preface to the *Sānfǎdù lùn* (T2145, 73a7). The relation of these equivalents to 'Vasubhadra' is certainly obscure, but there seems to be no reason not to accept the name as given in the transcription.[13] The author of the commentary, according to Huìyuǎn (73a11), was a Mahāyānist named Saṅghasena (僧伽先 Sēngqiéxiān). The date of composition is unknown for both the sutras and the commentary; but like the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, they obviously cannot be later than the time when they were translated, in the fourth century CE. The *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* is clearly Pudgalavādin, but there seems to be nothing to link it conclusively with a particular school. Thích Thiện Châu thinks that it is probably Vātsīputrīya (1984: 8; 1977: 99, 122).

The work consists of three sections dealing with three classes of *dharmas*: virtues, evils, and bases (of personal existence: the aggregates, realms and spheres).[14] Each of these in turn consists of three sections, so that the entire work is in nine *khaṇḍas*. This naturally reminds us of Jízàng's statement that the Abhidharma of the Vātsīputrīyas was in nine parts; it is conceivable, then, that what we have here is the *Dharmalakṣaṇābhidharma* that Vātsīputra is supposed to have learned from Rāhula, the disciple of Śāriputra. But since the present work is ascribed to Vasubhadra, it is far more likely that it merely reflects the organization of the *Dharmalakṣaṇābhidharma*, and that too, perhaps, only in a very superficial way.

The material in the work that is important for our purposes is in a passage dealing with non-knowledge in the section on evils. One of the kinds of non-

[13] Thích Thiện Châu discusses the matter at length in his dissertation (1977: 43f., 101).

[14] These may be related to the three kinds of meaning which the Vātsīputrīyas are supposed to have distinguished in the Buddha's teachings: "first, revealing the faults [leading to] Samsara; secondly, revealing the virtues [leading to] release; thirdly, revealing nothing" (or "the unrevealed" 無所顯 *wú suǒ xiǎn*). See Paramārtha's version of Vasumitra's account, T2034, 22a9–11; tr. Bareau, 1954: 258, n. 2.

knowledge is ignorance of the inexpressible, that is, the self or person. Unfortunately, the two Chinese translations differ considerably at this point, and we must wonder whether one or other of the explanations has been revised by the translator. The revision (if any) may of course be faithful to the meaning of the original work, though on the face of it the original work would have greater authority (as far as the doctrine is concerned) than a translator's explanatory revision of the text. But in this case the commentary which the translator might have revised was in any case not by a Pudgalavādin but by a Mahāyānist presumably knowledgeable concerning Pudgalavādin doctrines. (That a Mahāyānist might take a serious interest in the Pudgalavāda is shown by Xuánzàng's sojourn of two years in Parvata studying the Sāṃmitīya.) In such a case, it is not inconceivable that the translator might have a sounder grasp of the material than the commentator. All of this serves to remind us that we are not dealing with a clear-cut body of material on which to base our investigation, but something much more ambiguous, affording evidence of a kind, certainly, and invaluable for what it is, but tantalizing in its indefiniteness.

We are in fact fortunate to have two translations of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*. The first, the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, was made in 382 CE by Kumārabuddhi (鳩摩羅佛堤 Jiūmóluófótí).[15] In itself it is a difficult text to read and is probably corrupt, but it includes notes by Dàoān which are very useful, separating the *sutras*[16] from the commentary, indicating how the text is to be punctuated, and giving explanations of difficult terms. And because Kumārabuddhi often transcribed the Sanskrit terms of the original instead of giving Chinese equivalents, the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* provides us with what are in effect glosses for many of the important terms in the later translation. This is the *Sānfǎdù lùn*; it was produced in 391 by Gautama Saṅghadeva (瞿曇僧伽提婆 Qūtán Sēngqiétípó). It is somewhat clearer than Kumārabuddhi's translation, though still by no means easy to read. As it makes no distinction between the *sūtras* and the commentary, it often seems pointlessly repetitious.

The third Pudgalavādin work that has come down to us is the *Vinaya-dvāviṃśativyakti*, a Sāṃmitīya work giving a clarification (明了 *míngliǎo*, *vyakti*) of how one is to become accomplished (明了 *míngliǎo*, *vyakta*) in the monastic rules. It was written by Buddhatrāta (of whom nothing is known) and translated by Paramārtha, who lived in the sixth century CE. As mentioned before, it contains nothing on the subject of the self or person.

[15] Thích Thiện Châu uses "-bodhi" as well as "-buddhi", but the latter seems clearly to be right: Chou Fa-kao gives "biuət" as the ancient pronunciation of '佛' (1974: 7).

[16] I use '*sūtra*' for the brief prose statements of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* and similar texts, and 'sutra' for the discourses of the Buddha.

These, then, are the three original works of the Pudgalavāda that have survived through the imperfect medium of Chinese translation. In addition to these, there is a significant body of material from the Sāṃmitīya school preserved, apparently in direct quotation, in six chapters (16–21) of Daśabalaśrīmitra's *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya*.[17] This is a very late work, from the twelfth century CE. The original Sanskrit is lost, but it survives in a Tibetan translation (P5865).[18]

We can now turn to our second category, summaries of the doctrines of the Pudgalavāda included in some of the accounts of the formation of the Early Schools.

There are three works in which the doctrines of the schools are summarized: the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*,[19] the *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna*,[20] and the *Samayabhedoparacanacakre nikāyabhedopadarśanasaṃgraha*.[21] The first of these is by a Sarvāstivādin named Vasumitra, probably the Vasumitra of the second century CE whose views are recorded in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (Masuda, 1925: 7–9). It lists seven of the doctrines of the Vātsīputrīyas, but for the other Pudgalavādin schools gives only the information that they disagreed over the interpretation of a verse concerning the levels of attainment in the Buddhist Path.[22] It has survived in three Chinese translations, one of them anonymous (T2032)[23] and the others by Paramārtha (T2033) and Xuánzàng (T2031), and one Tibetan translation, by Dharmākara and bZaṅ skyoṅ (P5639). There is a commentary on it by Kuījī (MZZ 83, 0421–0467), and fragments of a commentary by Paramārtha quoted in Kuījī's commentary and in Chūkan Chōzen's (中觀澄禪) commentary (T2300) on a Chinese Mādhyamika work, Jízàng's *Sān lùn xuán yì*.[24]

The second, the *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna*, is by the Indian Mādhyamika philosopher Bhavya or Bhāvaviveka (sixth century CE) and is in fact an extract from the fourth chapter of his *Tarkajvālā*. It includes an account of the doctrines of the schools which is supposed to be Sāṃmitīya in origin,[25] although it records only one doctrine of the Sāṃmitīyas (and an obscure one at that) while

17 "Determination of the Created and the Uncreated."

18 See Skilling, 1987.

19 "Wheel of the Formation of Divisions among the Doctrines."

20 "Analysis and Explanation of the Divisions into Schools."

21 "Explanatory Compendium of the Divisions into Schools in the Wheel of the Formation of Divisions among the Doctrines."

22 See above, p. 36.

23 This has been ascribed, unconvincingly, to Kumārajīva and to Paramārtha; see Masuda, 1925: 5f. It includes at its beginning a translation of the section on the development of the schools in the *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchāsūtra* (T468, 501a, b).

24 See Demiéville, 1932.

25 Tāranātha, 206.19–207.5; Lama Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, 1981: 340.

giving eight doctrines of the Vātsīputrīyas, as well as one ascribed to the Dharmottarīyas. It has survived only in a Tibetan translation by Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna and Tshul khrims rgyal ba (P5640; P5256, 66d–69e).

The third work, the *Samayabhedoparacanacakre nikāyabhedopadarśanasaṃgraha*, is by an eighth-century Vijñānavādin named Vinītadeva. It lists five doctrines of the Pudgalavādins, identified collectively as the Āryasāṃmitīyas and including the Kaurukulakas, Dharmottarīyas and Vātsīputrīyas. It has come down to us only in a Tibetan translation (P5641); the name of the translator is unknown.

These summaries of the doctrines of the Pudgalavāda are of great value for indicating the range of ideas characteristic of these schools; but for the Pudglavādin doctrine of the self they give no more than the barest outline. To add significantly to what we know from the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, we have to turn to other sources, those in our third category. These are from schools hostile to the Pudgalavāda, which present the doctrine of a real self or person solely in order to refute it.

The earliest of these sources are two Abhidharma texts, the *Vijñānakāya* of the Sarvāstivādins, surviving for the most part only in Xuánzàng's Chinese translation (T1539), and the Theravādin *Kathāvatthu*, which we have in Pali,[26] both dating from about the second century CE. As mentioned above, the *Vijñānakāya* is said to have been written by Devaśarman in response to a Pudgalavādin treatise by the Arhat Gopa. In actuality, it is only the second chapter, the "Pudgalaskandhaka", that deals with the problem of the person. There we find an extended debate (537a27–547a2) between a Pudgalavādin (補特伽羅論者 *bǔtèqiéluó lùnzhě*), no doubt representing Gopa, and his opponent, described as a Śūnyatāvādin (性空論者 *xìng kōng lùnzhě*), who is of course not a Mādhyamika but Devaśarman himself; as a Sarvāstivādin he is a Śūnyatāvādin in the sense that he maintains that the aggregates are empty of any self. At each stage in the debate, the Pudgalavādin's position is stated and then refuted through a series of questions to which the Pudgalavādin is unable to make an adequate response. The style of the debate is formal, as if the disputants were speaking in turn before an audience.

The first chapter of the *Kathāvatthu* contains a similar debate between a Pudgalavādin and a Theravādin. The argument is rather more elaborate than in the *Vijñānakāya*, and the Pudgalavādin is represented as offering counter-arguments against the Theravādin, but the style of the debate in its formality is very much like that in the *Vijñānakāya*. The disputants are not explicitly

26 Edited by Taylor (1894–97).

identified in the text itself; the commentator explains that the Theravādin's opponent is here a Pudgalavādin, and says that the Pudgalavādins within the Buddhist community were the "Vajjiputtakas" (i.e. Vātsīputrīyas) and the Saṃmitīyas (KVA 9); those outside of the community would be non-Buddhists who affirmed the reality of the self.

Early in the second century CE, a vast commentary (*vibhāṣā*) on the *Jñānaprasthāna* (T1544), one of the Abhidharma texts of the Sarvāstivādins, was written by Pārśva and Vasumitra (Warder, 1980: 346). This *Mahāvibhāṣā* contains short statements of doctrines to which it is opposed, including some which it ascribes to the Vātsīputrīyas. It is available only in Xuánzàng's Chinese translation (T1545).

Our next source is the *Tattvasiddhi* (or *Satyasiddhi*), a work on Buddhist doctrine organized according to the Four Noble Truths. It has survived only in Kumārajīva's Chinese translation (T1646). Its author, Harivarman, apparently lived in the third century CE (Warder, 1980: 419). He is said by Paramārtha to have been a Bahuśrutīya (T2300, 460c21). The *Tattvasiddhi* contains a fairly substantial discussion of the Pudgalavāda, beginning with Harivarman's reasons for denying the reality of the person, and proceeding with the Pudgalavādins' rejoinder, and Harivarman's answer to their rejoinder (259a8–260c26). The style of the discussion is less formal than in the *Vijñānakāya* and *Kathāvatthu*, but the tone is nevertheless reasonable and courteous. The Pudgalavādins are identified specifically as Vātsīputrīyas.

There is a very brief account of the Pudgalavādins, identified as Vātsīputrīyas, in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (a commentary on the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*), also preserved only in a Chinese translation by Kumārajīva (T1509, 61a21–25). It has been traditionally ascribed to Nāgārjuna, the second-century author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā;* but it seems clear that it is in fact a later Mādhyamika work, written probably in the early fourth century CE (Lamotte, 1970: xl).

A Vijñānavādin work of the same period (Warder, 1980: 436), Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, contains twelve verses criticizing the Pudgalavāda (18.92–103). There is a commentary by Vasubandhu. Both the verses and the commentary have fortunately survived in Sanskrit[27] as well as in a Chinese translation by Prabhāmitra (T1604) and a Tibetan translation by Śākyasiṃha and dPal brtsegs (P5521, P5527).

The final chapter of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (a commentary on his own *Abhidharmakośa*) is a kind of appendix, the first part of which is

[27] Edited by Lévi (1907).

devoted to the Pudgalavāda. It consists of a lengthy, relatively informal debate between the author, representing the Sautrāntika position, and the Vātsīputrīyas. This work also has survived in Sanskrit,[28] and in Chinese translations by Paramārtha (T 1559) and Xuánzàng (T1558) and a Tibetan translation (P5591) by Jinamitra and dPal brtsegs. The *Abhidharmakośa* has generally been assigned to the fifth century CE (Warder, 1980: 447).

In the third chapter of the *Tarkajvālā*, Bhavya's commentary on his own *Madhyamakahṛdayakārikā*, there is a brief critique of the *pudgalavāda* of the Vātsīputrīyas (3.90–93).[29] The *Madhyamakahṛdaya* we have in Sanskrit; the *Tarkajvālā* we have only in the Tibetan translation of Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna and Tshul khrims rgyal ba (P5256). Bhavya is believed to have lived in the sixth century CE (Seyfort Ruegg, 1981: 61).

About a century later (Seyfort Ruegg, 1981: 71), Candrakīrti presented and criticized the doctrines of the Sāṃmitīyas in the sixth chapter of his *Madhyamakāvatāra* (6.146–149).[30] The work has survived only in a Tibetan translation by Tilaka and Sūryakīrti, revised by Kanakavarman and Sūryakīrti.[31] There is an extensive subcommentary (the *Madhyamakāvatāra* consists of verses and commentary) by Jayānanda; this also has survived only in Tibetan, in a translation by Jayānanda and Kun dga' grags (P5271). Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*, a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, also contains some important material. It is fortunately available in Sanskrit,[32] as well as in a Tibetan translation by Mahāsamati and Ñi ma grags, revised by Kanakavarman and Ñi ma grags (P5260).

In the *Chéng wéishì lùn* (T1585: 成唯識論), a comprehensive commentary on Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikā* by the seventh-century Chinese Vijñānavādin Xuánzàng, there is a very short critique of the Pudgalavādins (1c16–19), identified by the subcommentator Kuījī as "the Vātsīputrīyas and others" (T1830, 247c8).

28 Edited by Pradhan (1967) and by Dwarikadas Shastri (1970–73).

29 Edited and translated in Iida, 1980: 173–176.

30 There is also a passage (6.126ff.) which ascribes to the Sāṃmitīyas the view that the aggregates are the self or that consciousness is the self. This (in either version) is quite different from the position ascribed to them in verse 146, where as elsewhere they are represented as denying that the *pudgala* is either the same as the aggregates or different from them. In fact in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* the view that the aggregates are the self is presented and then refuted (T 1649, 463a19–b8, 465b1–7; Venkataramanan, 1953: 170, 178). It is perhaps conceivable that within the Sāṃmitīya there was a group who identified the *pudgala* with the aggregates, and that it is this group within the Sāṃmitīya itself that the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* criticizes; but it seems far more likely that this was some other branch of Buddhism, otherwise unknown to us, and that the ascription of this view to the Sāṃmitīyas is simply a mistake.

31 Edited by La Vallée Poussin (1907–12).

32 Edited by La Vallée Poussin (1903–13).

Finally, we have two eighth-century works by the Mādhyamika philosopher Śāntarakṣita (Seyfort Ruegg, 1981: 88). The first is the *Madhyamakālaṅkāra* (consisting of verses and commentary), in which there is a single verse (verse 9) criticizing the Pudgalavāda. It has come down to us only in the Tibetan translation of Śīlendrabodhi and Ye śes sde (P5285).[33] There is a subcommentary by Kamalaśīla, also available only in Tibetan (P5286). The second is the *Tattvasaṃgraha*, a comprehensive critical survey of the philosophies of the period, with a commentary by Kamalaśīla. Part of the seventh chapter, on various theories of the self, deals with the position of the Vātsīputrīyas (verses 336–349). The original Sanskrit texts of both the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and its commentary have fortunately survived.[34] There are Tibetan translations, of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* by Guṇakaraśrībhadra, dPal lha btsan pa and Źi ba 'od (P5764), and of Kamalaśīla's commentary by Devendrabhadra and Grags 'byor śes rab (P5765).

Through these works, spanning a period of about a thousand years, we are offered a series of glimpses of the schools of the Pudgalavāda at various stages of their development. The *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the two versions of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, even through the imperfect medium of their Chinese translations, show us the Pudgalavādins themselves as they were in the early centuries CE. The other texts present images, sometimes of a particular school, but more often of the Pudgalavādins in general, which may be more or less distorted by the attitudes and interests of the various schools which have preserved them. The picture of the Pudgalavādins which begins to emerge from these sources is by no means a precise one; but there is enough agreement among their respective accounts, and enough apparently significant variation within this general agreement, to reassure us that we are dealing neither with a single stereotyped description passed on mechanically from school to school, nor with the products of uncontrolled speculation and rumour. A detailed and exact history of the Pudgalavāda is certainly beyond our grasp, but we may at least hope to gain a clearer understanding of their doctrine of the reality of the indeterminate self, and of the basic outlook which informed it.

33 The verses have been edited by Ichigō Masamichi in Gómez and Silk, 1989: 141–225.

34 Edited by Kṛṣṇamācārya (1926) and Dwarikadas Shastri (1968).

Chapter 4

The *Pudgala*

THE clearest statements of the Pudgalavādins' doctrine of the person come not, as we might have supposed, from the surviving Pudgalavādin works themselves, which evidently expect the reader to be familiar with their basic position, but from the summaries of the doctrines of the schools by Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinītadeva. According to Vasumitra,

> The pudgala is not the aggregates, nor does it exist apart from the aggregates. Its concept is based on the aggregates, elements (*dhātu*) and spheres (*āyatana*). (P5639, 252b1; T2031, 16c14; T2033, 21c20)

Paramārtha's Chinese translation adds (rather obscurely):

> There are three kinds of concept: first, the concept comprehending the whole; secondly, the concept comprehending a part; and thirdly, the concept comprehending cessation. (T2033, 21c22)

Vinītadeva similarly says:

> The *pudgala* is not the aggregates; but while it is not the aggregates, neither is it separate from the aggregates. (P5641, 258b7)

Bhavya's account is of particular interest because part of it (List III) seems to be based on the traditions of the Sāṃmitīya. There we read:

> The *pudgala* is inexpressible as either the same as the aggregates to be appropriated or not the same. (P5256, 68c5; P5640, 255c2)

And also:

> The possessor of the appropriation of what is to be appropriated is a concept. (P5256, 68c4; P5640, 255b8–c1)

Vinītadeva presents the doctrine of the *pudgala* as common to all of the Pudgalavādin schools. Vasumitra and Bhavya present it as the view of the Vātsīputrīyas, but say nothing to suggest that any of the other schools either rejected it or differed in their interpretation of it. We may accordingly accept these statements, at least provisionally, as an account of what was held by all of the Pudgalavādins.

Some further information is offered by Kuījī in his commentary on Vasumitra's account:

> The self exists in reality, neither created nor uncreated. But it is neither the same as the aggregates nor separate from them. When the Buddha said that there is no self, he meant only that there is none that is the same as the aggregates or separate from them, like the selves imagined by the *tīrthikas* (the non-Buddhist philosophers). All of those [selves] are non-existent, but not the inexpressible self which is neither the same as the aggregates nor separate from them. Since it is inexpressible, its shape, limits, size and so on also cannot be stated. This self continues to exist until one becomes a Buddha.... The self is neither the same as the aggregates nor separate from them, and so also with the spheres and elements. But the world speaks of matter as the self, and so on to mental objects as the self. The terms for this self are conceived only on the basis of the aggregates and so on, but in reality the self is not the aggregates and so on. (YZLS, 0459a8–14)

The *pudgala*, then, is a self which is indeterminate in the sense that it is neither the same as the *dharmas* by which it is identified nor separate from them. Since it is not a distinct, determinate entity, its nature is "inexpressible".[1] We cannot say how far it extends in space or time, although we *can* say that it exists and that it endures as long as the aggregates which identify it continue to occur. According to Kuījī, its existence is real (as we should expect) and yet Bhavya seems to speak of it as a concept (for it is surely the *pudgala* to which the appropriation of the aggregates belongs). Perhaps what is meant is that because the *pudgala* itself

1 The Sanskrit is usually '*avācya*', but in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* we find '*avaktavya*' (AKB 9; DS ed. 1195.9); the Chinese is '不可說 *bùkěshuō*'; the Tibetan, '*brjod du med pa*'. The term is often used to mean specifically "inexpressible as either identical or different". Candrakīrti explains its use in the course of his argument against the Buddhist epistemologists' doctrine of *svalakṣaṇa* (own-characteristic). He first quotes Nāgārjuna, "How can there be an establishing of two things which cannot be established as either identical or different?" (MMK 2.21) and then continues: "If they say that [characterizable and characteristic] can be established as inexpressible, that is not so, for there is inexpressibility when [two things] cannot be conceived as distinct from each other..." (PPMV 64.8–11).

is inexpressible, whatever we affirm it to be is merely our conception of it, which serves to indicate it without actually defining it.

Since the *pudgala* endures through successive lives, it is the *pudgala* that can be said to pass from one life to another. As Bhavya explains:

> No *dharmas* transmigrate from this world to another world. The *pudgala*, having appropriated the five aggregates, transmigrates. (P5256, 68c4; P5640, 255c1f.)

This makes it sound as if the *pudgala*, unlike such things as matter, consciousness and Nirvana, is not a *dharma*. But to say that the *pudgala* is not a *dharma* would seem to be equivalent to admitting that it does not really exist. Vasumitra's account gives a somewhat different impression:

> Apart from the *pudgala*, there is no *dharma* which transmigrates from a former world to a later world, but on the basis of the *pudgala* one may say that there is transmigration. (T2031, 16c16)[2]

Here it is possible to assume that the *pudgala* is also a *dharma*, though no doubt of a peculiar kind. Perhaps in Bhavya's statement we are to take "*dharmas*" as meaning simply "created and uncreated *dharmas*" (which for other schools are all the *dharmas* that there are), with the understanding that the *pudgala* is a *dharma* which is neither created nor uncreated. Or perhaps the *pudgala* is to be thought of as not a *dharma* and yet really existing.

Let us now turn to the evidence afforded by the Pudgalavādin works themselves. Both the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* explain the person in terms of three concepts, based respectively (as they are described in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*) on its present aggregates, its transition from one life to the next, and its disappearance in Parinirvana. As might be expected, the explanations in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* differ to some extent; more surprisingly, the explanations in the two translations of the latter text also differ both in length and in substance: Kumārabuddhi's version (the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*) is three times as long as Saṅghadeva's (the *Sānfǎdù lùn*), and contains material which in the other version is entirely lacking (T1505, 10a3–29; T1506, 24a29–b7). It is hard to be sure whether the one has been expanded or the other mutilated, but it seems likely that

[2] This is Xuánzàng's version. Paramārtha has: "Apart from physical form (*rūpa*) there is not one *dharma* that goes from this world to a later world; there may be said to be the transmigration of the person" (T2033, 21c23f.). The Tibetan (P5639, 252b2f.) agrees with Xuánzàng.

Kumārabuddhi's version has been expanded, since Saṅghadeva's, though brief, still offers a coherent account; and as there are no other places in the text in which Kumārabuddhi's version contains a substantial amount of material which is lacking in Saṅghadeva's, it is probable that it was not the translator's policy to expand his version with his own explanations, and that the additional material was in fact already present in the text which he translated. It is surely significant that at the only other point in the work where there is a comparable discrepancy, it is Saṅghadeva's version which is the longer (T 1505, 10c8f.; T 1506, 24c16–25a5).

We shall begin with the shorter version of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*'s explanation, in Saṅghadeva's *Sānfǎdù lùn*. The *pudgala* is here referred to as "the inexpressible"; the purpose of the passage is to explain a particular kind of ignorance (*avidyā*), "ignorance of the inexpressible".

What is the inexpressible?

The inexpressible is conceived (or designated)[3] according to appropriation (受 *shòu*), past (過去 *guòqu*) and cessation (滅 *miè*).

It is conceived (or designated) according to appropriation, conceived (or designated) according to the past, and conceived (or designated) according to cessation. Ignorance [of this] is called ignorance of the inexpressible.

Conception (or designation) according to appropriation: when the sentient being has appropriated the aggregates, elements and spheres, it is thought to be the same [as them] or apart [from them].

Conception (or designation) according to the past: it is conceived on the basis of past aggregates, elements and spheres, as when it is said, "I was at that time Kuśendra (瞿旬陀 Qūxúntuó)."[4]

Conception (or designation) according to cessation: when they have ceased, it is conceived on the basis of [those] appropriations, as when it is said, "The Fortunate One has attained Parinirvana."

Moreover, conception (or designation) according to the past precludes the annihilation of the sentient being. Conception (or designation) according to cessation precludes its permanence. Conception (or designation) according to appropriation precludes its non-existence.

[3] '*Prajñapta* (施設 *shīshè*)' can mean either "conceived" or "designated". The relation between these meanings will be discussed in Chapter 9.

[4] This is presumably the King Kusa of the Pali *Kusajātaka* (No. 531). "Kuśa-indra" is of course "Lord Kuśa"; in the *Kusajātaka* he is sometimes referred to as "Kusanarinda," that is, "Kusa, Lord of Men" (J v 305.2, 12; 311.29).

> Conception (or designation) according to non-appropriation precludes its existence. (T1506, 24a29-b7)

Although Saṅghadeva's translation does not make it clear, the first statement in this passage is actually the *sūtra*, that is, one of the brief prose statements of which Vasubhadra's text consists, and the rest is Saṅghasena's commentary on it.

Several things are worth noting at this point. First, "conception according to appropriation" is defined in terms of a misunderstanding of the nature of the *pudgala*; "it is thought to be the same" as the aggregates, elements and spheres "or apart" from them. The reason may be that it is this misunderstanding that perpetuates the process of appropriation, so that the *pudgala* continues to be reborn in successive lives. Secondly, what is referred to in the *Sāṃmitīya-nikāyaśāstra* as the concept according to transition is here defined solely in terms of the past: the present *pudgala* is identified with the person it was in the past "on the basis of past aggregates, elements and spheres", but there is nothing about its identity with the person it will be in the future. Nor in fact does it seem to be its *transition* from past to present that is the basis for the concept. Finally, the last paragraph explains how these concepts preclude various wrong views concerning the person: the familiar "two extremes" of annihilation and permanence, but also the opinions that it does not exist and that it exists. Since the position of the Pudgalavāda is surely that the *pudgala* does exist, the statement here that conception according to non-appropriation precludes its existence is a little puzzling. But "non-appropriation" may be taken as equivalent to the end of rebirth; perhaps what is meant is that the *pudgala* cannot be said to exist in Parinirvana, although it can still be conceived and spoken of on the basis of its former appropriations. "Conception according to cessation" and "conception according to non-appropriation" would thus be virtually the same concept, since the aggregates and so on cease when they are no longer appropriated.

Now let us consider the longer version of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*'s explanation, in Kumārabuddhi's *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*.

> What is the inexpressible?
>
> The inexpressible is in (or relates to) conception (or designation) according to appropriation (受 *shòu*), approach (方便 *fāngbian*) and cessation (滅 *miè*). (*sūtra*)

It is conceived (or designated) according to appropriation, conceived (or designated) according to approach, and conceived (or designated) according to cessation. Delusion concerning this is called ignorance of the inexpressible.

Conception (or designation) according to appropriation: the living being (or soul: 命 *mìng*, *jīva*) is conceived by appropriating as a living being the aggregates, elements and spheres which are present and appropriated as internal. This means that conception (or designation) according to appropriation is the appropriating of the *dharmas* of the living being which are present and appropriated as internal, as a result of karmic formations (行 *xìng*, *saṃskāra*) and fetters (結 *jié*, *saṃyojana*),[5] but not those which are past or future. The *dharmas* and the living being which is conceived (or designated) by appropriation of them as a living being are neither the same nor otherwise, and to that extent they are connected. If the living being and the body were the same, [the living being] would be impermanent and [of the nature of] suffering. If they were different, it would be permanent and without suffering. If it were permanent, one would not practise the way of purity (*brahmacarya*), but if it were not permanent, there would be no need for the results of the way of purity. Appropriation (or attachment) and giving would be pointless (or non-causes: "無義 *wú yì*" here corresponds to "非因 *fēi yīn*" in Saṅghadeva's version)[6] if it were impermanent. They would be pointless in both approaches (方便 *fāngbian*), of eternalism and annihilationism: in neither is there any *dharma* [leading to] suffering or happiness.

Conception (or designation) according to approach: conceiving (or designating) according to the past, future and present kinds (行 *xìng*, "behaviour, character")[7] of approach is conception (or designation) according to approach. This conception (or designation) according to approach is linked to the three times, as "In a former time I was King Kuśa (衢黠 Qúxiá);"[8] and "In the future he will be called Ajita (無勝

[5] At a slightly earlier point in the text, Saṅghadeva has "action" (業 *yè*, *karman*) and "afflictions" (煩惱 *fánnǎo*, *kleśa*) where Kumārabuddhi has "karmic formations" and "fetters" (T1506, 24a22, T1505, 9c25; also at 24a25 and 9c29).

[6] T1505, 15a27, b1; T1506, 29c17, 19.

[7] The term in Saṅghadeva's version is '種 *zhǒng*'; the original probably had '*ākāra*'. See T1505, 6a14 and T1506, 20b24; 9c21 and 24a18; 12a26 and 26c14.

[8] See above, p. 56, n. 3. Dàoān gives a remarkable list of ten meanings for the Indic word represented by "衢黠 Qúxiá"; none of them corresponds to '*kuśa*', which is the name of a kind of grass. '*Kuśa*' has other meanings as well, but most of them seem to bear no relation to Dàoān's list. It is likely that Kumārabuddhi, who was no doubt Dàoān's authority in this matter, was thinking of words homophonous (or nearly so) in one of the Prakrits, or even in Apabhraṃśa. It is also possible that there are mistakes in the Chinese text: the first word in

Wúshèng);"[9] and "At present, masters of enchantment[10] and so on and various kinds of merchant...."[11] [The person] who has not yet appropriated [the aggregates] or who has already appropriated them (i.e. who is future or past) is conceived (or designated) conventionally. With regard to being cut off or permanent, if Kuśa had perished, how could "I" have been he? And if he had not perished, how could he have been said to be "I"? This conception (or designation) according to approach is explained as conventional truth.

What is conception (or designation) according to cessation?

The conception (or designation) according to cessation is [of one who is] at rest with appropriation ended and no [further] appropriating. (*sūtra*)

Appropriation is as previously explained. When that has ended, with no [further] appropriating, no seizing as another or oneself, [the one who is] at rest without remainder, having passed over from here to the further bank, is conceived (or designated) according to cessation. The averting of [the opinions of] this [person] as cut off and as permanent is thus the same, inasmuch as one who has made an end of his former appropriating according to his deeds, who is conceived (or designated) according to his Parinirvana, is also inexpressible. If he were different [from the aggregates], he could not have attained Parinirvana; if he were not different, he could not have attained Parinirvana. Such views having produced suffering, [this point] has not been explained. The attaining of Parinirvana should be [understood as] like the extinguishing of a lamp. [The views which] grasp extremes are the same, inasmuch as they are [of the nature of] suffering and without an objective basis.

Conception (or designation) according to approach is designation on the basis of past aggregates, elements and spheres, as "I was called King

the list, '羊 *yáng*' (which means "sheep"), is similar to '草 *cǎo*' ("grass") when they are written cursively.

9 This appears to be quoted from the *Mahāvastu* (or some similar text): "As I am now, so this Bodhisattva Ajita, when I have passed away, will be a Buddha in the world: Ajita by name, Maitreya by clan, in the royal city of Bandhumā" (MVas 1.59). For the legend of Ajita and his identification with Maitreya, see Lamotte, 1958: 775–785.

10 "工師達 *gōngshīdá*" means "master (or literally, "teacher-adept") of work". But Dàoān glosses it as "咒術 *zhòushù*", "art of incantation". There are several words in Sanskrit whose basic meaning pertains to action or work, such as '*kārmaṇa*', '*kṛti*', and '*kṛtyā*', and which have also the more specific meaning of "magic" or "enchantment"; presumably one of these was the first element in this expression.

11 "跋貳署 *báèrshǔ*", which Dàoān glosses as "商人 *shāngrén*", "merchant". According to Chou Fa-kao (1974: 340, 333, 259), the ancient pronunciation of '*báèrshǔ*' was "buat-niiʑio", which could represent '*vaṇija*'.

> Kuśa," and likewise of future [aggregates and so on]. Conception (or designation) according to cessation is explained as designation according to appropriations and so on which have ceased: "The Fortunate One has attained Parinirvana."
>
> As it is conceived (or designated) according to approach, the living being is not cut off. With conception (or designation) according to cessation, the permanence of the living being is precluded. With conception (or designation) according to appropriation, the existence and non-existence of the living being are precluded. (T1505, 10a3–29)

The general structure of the explanation is of course the same as in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*: the three kinds of conception are identified; each is explained, and they are then shown to preclude the various erroneous views concerning the person. The initial statement is marked as a *sūtra*, and so also is the definition of "conception according to cessation", but for some reason the definitions of the other two kinds of conception are not so marked. It seems clear that these also were in fact *sūtras*, since the text immediately following the definition of "conception according to appropriation" is merely a somewhat expanded statement of the definition, and the text following the definition of "conception according to approach" is similarly a restatement of the definition expanded by examples. The omission of the annotation "*xiūdùlù*" (*sūtra*) in these cases seems to have been simply an oversight.

In this version too there are a number of points worth noting. In the first place, conception according to appropriation is defined rather more precisely than in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*, as conception of the living being (i.e. the person) "by appropriating as a living being the aggregates, elements and spheres which are present and appropriated as internal". This definition is very similar to the explanation which the Vātsīputrīya is represented as giving in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*: "The person is conceived by appropriating the present aggregates appropriated as internal" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.7f.). The aggregates and so on must be present because past and future *dharmas* are understood to be non-existent; if the *pudgala* is to be conceived as existing, it must be on the basis of *dharmas* which actually exist. "Internal" here means "personal, belonging to oneself": the aggregates on whose basis the person is conceived must be taken as belonging to that person; one does not, after all, conceive of one's own being on the basis of someone else's body.

The indeterminacy of the *pudgala*, which is neither the same as the aggregates nor different from them, is explained as having to be assumed if the practice of

Buddhism is to serve any real purpose. If the person were the same as the aggregates, it would be impermanent and so of the nature of suffering; and it would have no future, so that any course undertaken for its eventual well-being would be pointless. If it were different from the aggregates, it would be permanent and already free of the suffering associated with them, and so there would be no need for any action on its behalf. These are in fact the usual Buddhist arguments against the two extremes of annihilationism and eternalism; what is unusual here is that the person, although indeterminate, is supposed to exist.

The next point is that the concept according to transition is here identified as "conception according to approach". The term 'approach' (方便 *fāngbian*, *upāya*) is familiar to us primarily from the Mahāyāna, where it refers to the skilful stratagems employed by a Buddha or Bodhisattva in leading sentient beings to enlightenment. Its significance here is not obvious; our discussion of it may be deferred, however, until we have considered the corresponding section of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*.

Unlike the *Sānfǎdù lùn*'s "conception according to the past", conception according to approach is related to the future and present as well as to the past. What this means in the case of the past and future is clear enough: the present person is identified with somebody in another time as the same person in a former or future life. But what is meant in the case of the present is not clear at all. The text seems to refer to persons identifiable by their occupations, but how that is comparable to identifying the present person with someone in the past or future remains obscure. (We shall find a similar problem in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*.) As in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*, there is no suggestion that this second way of conceiving the person ("according to the past" or "according to approach") is based on the person's *transition* from one life to another.

Like conception according to appropriation, conception according to approach is shown to preclude the two extremes of annihilationism and eternalism. If a person can be reborn into a new life, with a new body, feelings, thoughts and so on, it is clear that the person is not annihilated at death and also that it does not persist unchanged. The identification of the present person with a person in a former life in fact depends on their being neither totally distinct (as would be the case if the past person had been destroyed) nor exactly the same (as would be the case if the person were permanent and somehow unaltered by dying and being reborn). The relation between the person and who it was or will be, like the relation between the person and its aggregates, is necessarily indeterminate.

It is to be noted also that conception according to approach is said to be "explained as conventional truth". This apparently is because future and past persons are "conceived conventionally", and that no doubt is because only present persons actually exist; our conceptions of past and future persons refer conventionally to what does not yet exist or what exists no longer. Whether conception according to approach that relates to the present is also to be understood as conventional is unclear.

Like the other two kinds of conception, conception according to cessation is shown to preclude the two extremes. If the person were different from the aggregates, it would already be free of them even before their final cessation, and so it would make no sense to speak of Parinirvana as something which the person attains. If the person were the same as the aggregates, with their final cessation there would no longer be any person to attain it. The person after reaching the end of rebirth, even as before reaching it, is thus inexpressible.

The full explanation of the three kinds of conception is followed by a brief statement of the second and third kinds of conception; this seems at first sight like a summary of the corresponding sections of the full account. But it is actually very similar to the explanation of these two kinds of conception in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*; the only significant differences are that conception according to the past is here called "conception according to approach", as it is in the full explanation, and that in the account of this kind of conception there is a very brief reference to the future (but not to the present). It can hardly be doubted that what we have here is the original text, as in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*, and that the extended explanation was inserted before this passage and after an improved version of the account of conception according to appropriation. The original account of "conception according to the past" was then slightly altered to bring it into agreement with the added material. What is odd, however, is that the new material seems to include *sūtras* as well as commentary. Either we are mistaken in thinking that the passages in question are actually *sūtras* (even though one of them was identified as a *sūtra* by Dàoān) or else further *sūtras* were written (or perhaps discovered in some other version of the text) at the time when the commentary was being expanded.

Finally, as in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*, the three kinds of conception are again explained as precluding the various erroneous views concerning the *pudgala*. But here there is no mention of conception according to non-appropriation. Conception according to appropriation is said to preclude the existence as well as the non-existence of the living being. What this means is not very clear. Perhaps it is similar to what I have suggested for the account in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*, that

while the person is alive it cannot be said to be non-existent, since it can be conceived according to its appropriation of the aggregates, and when it has attained Parinirvana it can no longer be said to be existent, since the aggregates on the basis of which it was conceived have now vanished once and for all. Otherwise it would seem to be saying that the person is neither truly existent nor entirely non-existent; and that is what might be said of an entity which is merely conceptual, which exists only according to a particular way of speaking. It will also be recalled that Bhavya says that "the possessor of the appropriation of what is to be appropriated is a concept"(P5256, 68c4; P5640, 255b8–c1). Perhaps the Pudgalavādins in fact held the *pudgala* to be a purely conceptual entity. (We shall see later that there is other evidence to support this interpretation.) But if the *pudgala* exists only in that sense and not as a reality, how does the doctrine of the Pudgalavāda differ from what we now think of as the orthodox view?

Let us move on to the account of the three concepts of the person in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*.

How is the person explained as existing?

The Buddha said that there are three kinds of person.

What are the three kinds of person?

The person conceived (or designated) according to the basis (依 *yī*), the person conceived (or designated) according to transition (度 *dù*), and the person conceived (or designated) according to cessation (滅 *miè*).

What is the person conceived (or designated) according to the basis?

As the Buddha explained when he spoke to Pāpaya (跋婆耶 Bápóyé), "Whatever the formations [i.e. created *dharmas*] on whose basis it is expressed, from those its name is established." This is called conception (or designation) according to the basis, as in the example of fire. And the Buddha said to Śāriputra, "A person is called Nāga (象 Xiàng) who is fair, pure and attractive; what is formed by the four material elements is called the self," and so on. It is also as in the example of milk. Thus on the basis of what is said in the sutras, this is called conception (or designation) according to the basis.

In the case of physical form and the person who acquires the physical form [as a body], the person who acquires the physical form cannot be said to be different from the physical form, and the physical form cannot be said to be different from the person who acquires the physical form. On the basis of the physical form we derive the expression, "the person based on physical form".

If the explanation of the person is that the physical form is the self, that it consists of its physical form, this is called "view of self". If the explanation of the person is that the physical form is the self, there is in consequence the error that the five aggregates are the person. What has been said previously establishes that this is an error.

Moreover, if the explanation of the person is that the person who acquires the physical form is different from the physical form, this is called "view of a separate self". If the explanation of the person is as a separate self, there is in consequence the error that the person is different from the five aggregates. This has been established as an error.

That "the person who acquires the physical form" is merely a synonym (相從 *xiāngcóng, paryāya*)[12] for "the physical form" is not a true explanation. If the explanation of the person is that "physical form" and "person who acquires the physical form" are merely synonyms, this constitutes "wrong view". "Wrong view" is the error of stating that there is no self. What has been said previously establishes that this is an error.

Therefore there are the three errors [i.e. that the self is physical form, that the self is different from physical form, and that there is no self].

So identity and difference (實異 *shíyì, tattva-anyatva*)[13] are wrong views; not to subscribe to identity or difference is not to subscribe to a wrong view. On the basis of physical form the person who acquires physical form may be designated. Therefore the person who acquires the physical form may in fact be designated in common with the physical form. So at the very time when the physical form arises, the person which acquires the physical form also arises; at the very time when the physical from ceases, the person which has acquired the physical form also ceases. It is not that it is inexpressible.

So it is to be understood that the person [based on] the five aggregates and the twelve spheres in any of the five destinies, or with *asuras* and the intermediate existence, seven destinies, and in the present existence whether *kalala*, *arbuda*, *ghana*,[14] *peśi* or *praśākhā*, as newborn, child, youth, middle aged, or old, with a mind determined as good or bad, following the rules or transgressing the rules, is called on the basis of the

[12] '*Paryāya*' can mean "succession" as well as "synonym"; hence the Chinese translation, which of course is inappropriate to this context.

[13] '實 *shí*' is the usual equivalent for '*tattva*' in the sense of "reality". But '*tattva*' can also mean identity, "just-that-ness". Candrakīrti (PPMV 436.2) represents the Pudgalavādins as describing the Tathāgata as "inexpressible in terms of identity, difference and so on" (*tattvānyatvādyavācyam*).

[14] Here we have simply "那 *nuó*", but the same list of prenatal stages appears later, at 472b14, with "伽那 *qiénuó*". In Theravādin and Sarvāstivādin sources, *ghana* follows *peśi*.

above *dharmas*, and all of the above whether combined or not combined, the person conceived (or designated) according to the basis.

What is the person conceived (or designated) according to transition?

At the time when it is passing over to another existence, it is described by the Buddha as "a being in transition".

What are the beings conceived (or designated) according to transition?

Those conceived (or designated) according to the past, according to the future, and according to the present.

What is conception (or designation) according to the past?

As it says in the *Devadūtasūtra* (天使修多羅 *Tiānshì xiūduōluó*),[15] "They inform Yama, 'This man did not acknowledge father or mother, older or younger brother; he did not acknowledge virtue, or good and bad. Please instruct us [what to do with him].'" And as the Buddha said, "I was formerly King Mūrdhaja (頂生王 Dǐngshēng wáng)." This is called conception (or designation) according to the past.

What is conception (or designation) according to the future?

As the Buddha said, "When a *cakravartin* king is in the intermediate state, he will first enter his mother's womb as if entering a hall or palace." And as the Buddha said to Maitreya, "Ajita, when later you become a Buddha, you will be called Maitreya."[16] This is called conception (or designation) according to the future.

What is conception (or designation) according to the present?

As the Buddha said to the man of Aṅga (安伽 Ānqié), "He has earrings and various jewels adorn his arms and hands." And as the Buddha said, "An elder who is very rich has much wealth and great power." This is called conception (or designation) according to the present.

On the basis of the formations in the three times, the Buddha established three conceptions (or designations): so it is to be understood. Since it is conceived (or designated) according to the transition of its formations, this is called conception (or designation) according to transition.

What is the person conceived (or designated) according to cessation?

Apart from the person conceived (or designated) according to the basis and the person conceived (or designated) according to transition, the Buddha spoke of the person conceived (or designated) according to cessation, as "when the former body is broken up"; this is called conception (or designation) according to cessation. And as the Buddha

15 "The God's Messengers." See M iii 179.

16 See above, p. 59, n. 9.

said, "The five aggregates of a monk in whom the influxes (*āsrava*) are extinct will cease through their impermanence." This is called conception (or designation) according to cessation. And as the Buddha said, "None of the wise can fathom those who have attained the unshakeable happiness."[17] This is called conception (or designation) according to cessation.

With regard to conception (or designation) according to the basis and conception (or designation) according to transition, it is said, "There is the person who leaves the five aggregates of his present life and takes up the five aggregates of the intermediate state." With regard to conception (or designation) according to cessation, the Buddha says, "There is no further case of his taking up the aggregates." (T1649, 466a28–c27)

The first thing to note is that the passage sets out to explain not merely three different ways of conceiving the person but three different kinds of person, each defined, it seems, by the particular mode of its conception. To what extent these "kinds of person" are actually distinct is hard to say. Since it is supposed to be the same person that goes through successive lives and eventually attains Parinirvana, we may reasonably assume that the kinds of person are distinct only in a manner of speaking, as the same object may appear different according to the different relations by which we define it. Yet to identify the person variously conceived as different *kinds* of person naturally makes us wonder whether the person may not in some sense be constituted by our conception of it, whether it is not after all a conceptual entity.

Conception according to the basis corresponds to conception according to appropriation in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*. The created *dharmas* ("formations") which have been appropriated as a person are the basis for the person's existence (however that is to be understood) and for our conception of it. Conception is evidently a matter of naming and thus identifying something on the basis of its characteristics, constituents or support. The example of fire is probably meant to recall a number of passages in the Tipiṭaka, in particular the *Esukārisutta*, in which the social status of a person is said to be based on lineage as the term for a particular kind of fire is based on its fuel (M ii 181); the *Mahātaṇhā-saṅkhayasutta*, in which consciousness (not the person) is said to be named according to the conditions for its production (visual consciousness being so called because it depends on the eye and visual form) as fire is named according to its fuel (M i 259); and a passage in the *Avyākatasaṃyutta* (S iv 399) in which

[17] There is a similar verse in *Udāna* 8.10 (U 93); translated by Masefield, 1994: 182.

the rebirth of a person on the basis of its appropriation (*upādāna*) is compared to the blazing up of a fire on the basis of its fuel (*upādāna*). The example of milk may have been suggested by the *Poṭṭhapādasutta*, in which three kinds of personality, material, mental and formless, are said to receive different designations as milk receives new designations upon changing into the various products derived from it (D i 201). These examples of fire and milk appear also in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*: there the Vātsīputrīya is represented as using fire and fuel to explain the relationship between the *pudgala* and its aggregates, and Vasubandhu himself offers milk as an example of a composite and therefore conceptual entity (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.2).

As in the longer version of the account in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, the explanation of conception according to the basis is followed by a discussion of the errors avoided by the recognition of the person's indeterminacy in relation to matter (or physical form) and the other four aggregates. The errors here are given names: to regard the aggregates as self is "view of self"; to regard the person as different from the aggregates is "view of a separate self"; and to regard the person as simply the aggregates themselves under a different name and so to deny that there is any self at all except as a verbal convenience is "wrong view". The first two of these are already familiar to us. The third is of particular interest because it rejects the view that the person is merely a nominal entity: talking about the person is apparently not simply another way of talking about the aggregates. Whatever its nature, the self is not merely the aggregates themselves.

The three errors are briefly identified here, but the arguments by which they are shown to be errors are set out earlier in another section of the text, to which the present passage refers. We shall consider some of these arguments later.

A few points are worth noting in the remaining material in this section. First, it is odd that after stating the three errors, the text goes on to discuss only identity and difference. Perhaps the third error was considered a variant of the first; in each of these the person and the aggregates are identified with each other, although in the first error the aggregates are regarded as the self and so assimilated to an erroneous notion of self, whereas in the third, the person is thought to be no more than the aggregates themselves under a different name, and so even the legitimate notion of self is abandoned. Logically, of course, identity is identity; but where the identification is false and the appearance of identity is achieved by assimilating one thing to another, there will be two forms in which the false identity may appear, according to which has been assimilated to which.

Secondly, the first two errors, identity and difference, are described here as "wrong views". But this is the term which in the original account of the errors

was used for the third error, apparently in contrast to the other two. It would seem now that in fact all three are "wrong views", with the first two also identified more specifically as "view of self" and "view of a separate self".

Thirdly, there is the remarkable statement that "at the very time when physical form arises, the person who acquires the physical form also arises; at the very time when the physical form ceases, the person who has acquired the physical form ceases." This seems to assert that the person shares in the impermanence of the aggregates, as it would if it were identical with them. But we have seen in Kumārabuddhi's version of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, that "if the living being and the body were the same, [the living being] would be impermanent...," and this is offered as a reason for denying that they are the same. The *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* agrees that the person and the physical form (or the living being and the body) are not the same, and yet here apparently affirms what the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* assumes to be false, that the person shares in the impermanence of the aggregates. The *Sāṃmitīya-nikāyaśāstra* itself, in an earlier section of the text, uses the same argument against identifying the aggregates and the self: "When [the aggregates] are destroyed or when they arise, the self also would arise, also would be destroyed" (T1649, 465b10).[18] The *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* thus seems to contradict itself.

A possible explanation is that "the person who acquires the physical form" is not simply the person, but the person conceived as possessing the aggregates, and that the person *so conceived* comes into being only where there are the aggregates to be possessed, and when those pass away, the person so conceived also passes away. It is thus appropriate to speak of the arising and passing away of the person in birth and death, even though the person itself is not impermanent but continues beyond death, conceived in its continuity "according to transition". "The person who acquires the physical form" may in fact be the same as "the possessor of the appropriation of what is to be appropriated" to which Bhavya refers, a conceptual entity which, if this explanation is correct, is not quite the same as the *pudgala* itself.

This might also shed light on the other point that seems odd, that the person is said *not* to be inexpressible. That the person is inexpressible in its relation to the aggregates is clear; we have the authority of Bhavya's account, which apparently is Sāṃmitīya in origin, Kuījī's commentary on Vasumitra, and the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, which actually refers to the person as "the inexpressible". But if the person were inexpressible in every respect, it would be impossible to

18 The sentence has evidently been misplaced in the transmission of the text. There can be little doubt that Venkataramanan (1953: 178; 224, n. 42) is right to take it as part of the refutation of identity, where alone it makes sense.

say anything at all about it, and there could be no doctrine of the *pudgala*. It may be against that absurdity that the statement here is directed: the person *is* expressible in terms of its appropriation of the aggregates. As the text explains,

> On the basis of the physical form the person which acquires the physical form may be designated. Therefore the person which acquires the physical form may in fact be designated in common with the physical form.

In identifying the physical form that is appropriated (the person's body), we also identify the person which appropriates it. In this sense, then, the person is expressible. But in its relation to the aggregates by which we identify it, the person is inexpressible as either identical with them or separate.

The second kind of conception, which in the *Sānfǎdù lùn* is identified as "conception according to the past" and in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* as "conception according to approach", is here defined as "conception according to transition": "At the time when it is passing over to another existence, it is described by the Buddha as 'a sentient being in transition'." As in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, this kind of conception is explained as relating to past, present and future. The examples of conception according to past and future are similar to those in the other work; and as with those, it is not clear that the conception in each case is based on *transition*, except in the sense that when a present person is identified with someone in the past or the future, the transition from the one individual to the other is implied. The examples of conception according to the present are also somewhat similar, at least in their obscurity: it is far from clear what the possession of jewels and wealth has to do with "transition". But we can return to this problem after considering the rest of the passage.

The explanation of the third kind of conception, "according to cessation," is similar to that in the two versions of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*. Of the three examples of this kind of conception, the third is of particular interest: "None of the wise can fathom those who have attained the unshakeable happiness." This verse has already appeared in an earlier section of the text (T 1649, 463c21) as part of the argument of certain schools (we are not told which) that the person is eternal. The author replies:

> When one gains Nirvana without residue [that is, Parinirvana], then the unshakeable happiness is attained. But if the person were eternal, it would have neither birth nor death, like Nirvana; its body, having neither birth nor death, would not change; its wisdom, whatever the sphere in which it

> dwelt, also would not change.... Because eternal, it would have no alteration. It would also have neither bondage nor liberation. (T1649, 466a11–14)

The verse was probably chosen to illustrate conception according to cessation because it cannot be supposed to affirm, at least in any ordinary sense, the non-existence of the one who has attained Parinirvana. (It will be recalled that the Buddha rejected the view that the Tathāgata is non-existent after his death, as well as the view that he exists.) In fact it seems clearly to indicate some kind of being in Parinirvana; the happiness, after all, whatever it may be, is not nothing. This impression is confirmed by a passage in Bhavya's *Tarkajvālā*:

> The Vātsīputrīyas say that [Nirvana] has the nature of both existence and non-existence; for as there is no body, faculty or thought in Nirvana, it is non-existence; but as the supreme, everlasting happiness is there, it is existence. (P5256, 38a5f.; Iida, 1980: 196)

The verse could thus be misinterpreted as showing that the person that attains Parinirvana is eternal, like Nirvana itself. To this misinterpretation the author responds not by declaring that the person is non-existent, but by reminding his opponents that the person is after all subject to birth and death, bondage and release, as it could not be if it were eternal and so presumably transcendent.

The account of the three kinds of conception ends, as in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, with a summary. But here there is no reference to the errors concerning the person. The three kinds of conception are instead connected with two quotations, the first of which appears again and again in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* almost as a refrain: "There is the person who leaves the five aggregates of his present life and takes up the five aggregates of the intermediate state." The assertion that there is the person is an example of conception according to the basis. The statement that the person moves from the present life to the intermediate state is an example of conception according to transition. The other quotation, "There is no further case of his taking up the aggregates," is of course an example of conception according to cessation. The three kinds of conception and the two quotations that illustrate them thus sum up three fundamental facts with which Buddhism is concerned: our existence, our perennial journey through the suffering of Samsara, and our eventual release in Parinirvana.

The differences between these three accounts of the three kinds of conception are rather surprising. As we have seen, the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*'s "conception according to the basis" is called "conception according to appropriation" in both versions of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*; "conception according to transition" is "conception according to the past" in the *Sānfǎdù lùn* and "conception according to approach" in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*. Even if the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* were produced by different schools within the Pudgala-vāda, one would have expected the terms for these concepts of the person to be standardized as part of their technical vocabulary. That there are differences in the explanations of these terms is natural enough; but the disagreement between the *Sānfǎdù lùn* and the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* in their versions of the *Tridharma-khaṇḍaka*'s account of the second kind of conception is so extensive that the versions must surely represent different stages not only in the development of the text, but also in the elaboration of the doctrine which it presents.

In the matter of terminology, we have to bear in mind that we are dealing with translations, and that what appear to be different terms may well be the same term differently translated. That in fact seems to be the case with the first kind of conception. The sense of the two expressions, "conception according to the basis" and "conception according to appropriation" is obviously similar, for it is the five aggregates which by being appropriated become the basis for the conception of the person. But the terms themselves may have been identical. In the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, the expression is "依說 *yīshuō*", which Venkata-ramanan renders as "*āśrayaprajñapti*" (as in his reconstruction of the work's title). In the two versions of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, it is "受施設 *shòu shīshè*" (*Sānfǎdù lùn*) and "受教授 *shòu jiàoshòu*" (*Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*), both rendered by Thích Thiện Châu as "*upādānaprajñapti*". These are reasonable equivalents; we know for example from the Chinese translations of the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, which we have in Sanskrit, that '依 *yī*' can represent '*āśraya*' and '受 *shòu*' can represent '*upādāna*'. But in Xuánzàng's translation, '依 *yī*' is also used for '*upādāna*',[19] whereas '受 *shòu*' does not appear to be used for '*āśraya*' in either translation.[20] The original term in both texts, then, may have been '*upādāna-prajñapti*'.

But a further possibility suggests itself. As we shall see later, one of the kinds of concept recognized by the Theravādins is the "concept based on", the

19 For "*skandhāntaratyāgopādānāt*" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1214.7), Paramārtha has "由捨此陰受彼別陰 *yóu shě cǐ yīn shòu bǐ bié yīn*" (T1559, 308a7), and for "*pudgala eva hi tasyā upādānaṃ prāpnoti*" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1195.14), Xuánzàng has "則但應說依補特伽羅 *zé dàn yīng shuō yī bǔtèqiéluó*" (T1558, 153b9). '*yī*' for '*āśraya*' is common in both translations.

20 Hirakawa, 1973: 1.86; 2.208. But it should be noted that there are occasional omissions in Hirakawa's index.

"*upādāpaññatti*" in Pali. The concept of the person, which is based on the five aggregates, is understood to be a concept of this type. '*Upādā*' is '*upādāya*' in Sanskrit; it means "having appropriated (as a support)", "based on", "depending on". Now the term '依 *yī*' is used in both of the translations of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* to represent '*upādāya*'.[21] The other term, '受 *shòu*', is not so used; but we find it in Kumārajīva's translation of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, where '*upādāya*' is rendered as "受 *shòu*"[22] and "從受生 *cóng shòu shēng*" (literally, "produced from appropriation"),[23] and the negative '*anupādāya*' ("independent of") as "無受 *wúshòu*" (T 1564, 35b25; MMK 25.12c) and "不受 *búshòu*" (T 1564, 35b10; MMK 25.9c). It is perhaps more likely, then, that the original term was not '*upādānaprajñapti*', but '*upādāyaprajñapti*', the expression which in its Pali form is used by the Theravādins to characterize the concept of the person. This would suggest, then, that the real title of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* should be "*Upādāyaprajñapti*", not "*Āśrayaprajñapti*".

The problems presented by the second kind of conception are not so easily disposed of. Here we have first of all the substantial difference in content between the two versions of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*: the *Sānfǎdù lùn* identifies the second kind of conception simply as "conception according to the past"; the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, like the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, explains it as threefold, consisting of conception according to the past, according to the future, and according to the present. Then there is the difference in terminology between the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* and the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, the former speaking of "conception according to approach" and the latter, "conception according to transition". Finally we have the problem of conception according to the present: in both the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* and the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, it is explained (obscurely in any case) in ways which seem to have nothing in common with the explanation of the other two forms of conception according to approach (or transition), in which the conception is evidently based on the relation between successive lives of the person.

We have already noted that the account in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* seems to have been formed by the insertion of an extended explanation into the simpler account in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*. But why did the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* in its original form not mention conception according to the future and according to the

21 For example, Paramārtha has "依過去四大成立此義故 *yī guòqu sìdà chénglì cǐ yì gù*" (T 1559, 226c6) and Xuánzàng has "依過去大種施設 *yī guòqu dàzhǒng shīshè*" (T 1558, 68c27) for "*atītāny api mahābhūtāny upādāya prajñapteḥ*" (AKB 43d; DS ed. 578.10).

22 "受諸因緣故 *shòu zhū yīnyuán gù*" (T 1564, 35b9) for "*upādāya pratītya vā*" (MMK 25.9b).

23 "是二從受生 *shì èr cóng shòu shēng*" (T 1564, 35b25) for "*upādāyobhayaṃ hi tat*" (MMK 25.12d).

present? The only obvious explanation is that the doctrine initially recognized only conception according to the past and was later expanded when it was noticed that the person could also be conceived according to future and present. Perhaps the original intention was to explain and justify the Buddha's references to his own previous existences. His predictions of the future lives of other persons are no doubt less common, and conception according to what a person is in the present would naturally be thought of as equivalent to the first kind of conception, conception according to appropriation, or (as we should now say) conception based on, depending on, the present aggregates. With the expansion of the doctrine to include conception according to future and present, a more general term for these three forms of temporal conception of the person would have to be found. In the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* it was "conception according to approach"; in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, "conception according to transition".

This brings us to our next problem: why do the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* and the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* use different terms for the second kind of conception? It is possible that at the time when the passages in question were written, the expanded doctrine was still in the process of development. Its terms would thus not yet have become standardized, and the authors of the two accounts would simply have adopted the terms that best suited their particular understanding of the doctrine. But we should also consider the possibility that here, as in the case of the first kind of conception, the terms were actually the same, their apparent difference being merely the result of translation.

Can we understand these terms as two different translations of the same term? As noted earlier, "approach" is "方便 *fāngbian*" (literally, "convenience"), understood as representing its usual Sanskrit equivalent, '*upāya*'. "Transition" is "度 *dù*", which Venkataramanan takes to represent '*saṃkrama*'. '*Upāya*' generally means "approach" in the sense of an expedient or stratagem; it is this sense that is conveyed by '方便 *fāngbian*'. But in its basic sense of "going to" it obviously has some affinity with '*saṃkrama*' ("transition"). We may reasonably suppose, then, that the term in both texts was '*upāya*', and that it was translated correctly, though somewhat loosely, as "度 *dù*" in the Chinese version of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, and misleadingly as "方便 *fāngbian*" in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*. But of course it is also conceivable that the terms were different in the two texts: '*upāya*' in the Indic original of the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, and '*saṃkrama*' or some other such word in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*. The meaning of the two terms would in any case be similar.

In all this we have assumed that the second kind of conception is based on the person's "transition" or "approach" to another life. In the case of the *Sāṃmitīya-*

nikāyaśāstra, that assumption seems to be supported by the text: "At the time when it is passing over to another existence, it is described by the Buddha as 'a being in transition'." But as we have already noted, there is no indication in either version of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* that the *transition* of the person is the basis for the conception. And in both texts, conception according to the present seems to have nothing to do with transition at all.

This brings us to our third problem: what is the nature of conception according to the present? In the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, it is illustrated by an obscure and apparently fragmentary quotation: "At present, masters of enchantment and so on, and various kinds of merchants...." In the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, two sayings of the Buddha are offered: "He has earrings and various jewels adorn his arms and hands;" and "An elder who is very rich has much wealth and great power." These seem to be examples of persons who although present are conceived not on the basis of their present aggregates, but according to their occupation or expertise in the one case, and their possessions in the other. That these could be recognized as involving distinct forms of conception is confirmed by a Theravādin work, the commentary on the *Puggalapaññatti* (The Concept of a Person). There, in addition to the *upādāpaññatti*, by which the person is conceived on the basis of the five aggregates, we find the relational concept (*upanidhāpaññatti*) and the functional concept (*kiccapaññatti*). One of the several kinds of relational concept is the concept according to relation to the associated or connected (*sampayuttūpanidhā*), and among the examples of this is "*kuṇḍalin*", "wearing earrings". The functional concept is illustrated by examples such as "*atthabhāṇaka*", "explainer of the meaning" (PPA 173f.). These seem to correspond fairly closely to the examples of persons "conceived according to the present".

But how is this form of conception similar to conceiving the person on the basis of past or future aggregates? And is there any way in which it could be thought of as involving transition?

In both accounts of conception according to the present, the person is conceived not directly, on the basis of the aggregates, but indirectly, according to the person's relation to something else, a function or a possession. And when a person is identified with someone in the past or the future, the person is likewise conceived not on the basis of its present aggregates, but according to that former or future existence to which the present person is related. In each case, the conception is indirect, transferred, as it were, from the relationship on which it is based to the person defined by the relationship. Perhaps the "transition" for which this kind of conception is named should be understood not as the person's

transition from one life to another, but rather as the concept's "transition" or transference from the defining relationship to the person that is defined by it.

The term that is used specifically for this kind of conceptual transference, by which one thing is identified through reference to another, is '*upacāra*'.[24] One of the expressions for which '方便 *fāngbian*' is an equivalent in Paramārtha's translation of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* is '*aupacārika*',[25] an adjective formed from '*upacāra*'; and since the basic meaning of '*upacāra*', like '*upāya*', is "approach", '度 *dù*' might conceivably serve as a loose translation of '*upacāra*' as well as '*upāya*'. Perhaps the original term for the second kind of conception was actually '*upacāraprajñapti*'.

But what about the statement in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* that conception according to transition is so called because it is based on the transition of the sentient being from one life to another? The statement seems clear enough: "At the time when it is passing over to another existence, it is described by the Buddha as 'a being in transition'." One might wonder whether the text is not open to some other interpretation; there is after all no explicit indication of what it is that is "passing over". But although the Chinese text of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* abounds in obscurities, in this case it is difficult to see how else it could be interpreted. '度 *dù*' is certainly used in other parts of the text for the "passing over" of a sentient being to its next existence, and "異有 *yì yǒu*" can hardly be anything but "other existence", "*bhavāntara*". I believe the statement has to be accepted as saying what it appears to say. But then we are left with the problem of how to reconcile this statement with the explanation of conception according to the present, which clearly has nothing to do with the transition of the sentient being.

Perhaps the original term was in fact '*upacāra*', used equivocally for both the person's "approach" to another existence and the "transference" of the concept of a person's function or possessions to the person defined by them. '*Upacāra*' is not a term normally used for the transition from one life to another (neither, for that matter, is '*upāya*'), but it might conceivably have been adopted in order to encompass the two notions of approach and transference within a single term, thus acknowledging what appears to be the older doctrine, in which the second kind of conception was simply conception according to transition from the past, while assimilating it to the more general doctrine of conceptual transference. But even so, the statement in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* remains a problem, since it clearly indicates that the second kind of conception is supposed to be based on transition to another life, and yet is presumably meant to explain the second kind

24 See Renou, 1957: 102.

25 T1559, 253a4; AKB 5.2a, DS ed. 762.5.

of conception as a whole, and not merely those parts of it which involve transition from one life to another.

The critique of the Pudgalavāda in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* offers a further clue to the solution of this problem. Vasubandhu has raised the objection that if the *pudgala* is born, as the Pudgalavādins assert on the basis of sutras that say, "There is one person born in the world..." (A i 22, 23), then the *pudgala* ought to be created (*saṃskṛta*), like the aggregates. The Vātsīputrīya replies,

> It is not born as the aggregates are, for they appear without having previously existed.
>
> How, then?
>
> By acquiring (*upādāna*) other aggregates, as a ritualist or a grammarian is said to be born by acquiring knowledge, or as a monk or a wanderer is born by acquiring the characteristics of one, or as one old or sick is born by acquiring another condition. (AKB 9; DS ed. 1207.11–1208.3)

The *pudgala* is born not in the sense that it is created, beginning to exist only at the time of its birth, but in the sense that it acquires a new set of aggregates by which it can be identified as that person in that particular life. This is analogous to the "birth" of a ritualist, who as a person already exists, through the acquisition, the "appropriation", of the knowledge necessary for being a ritualist. The ritualist can then be identified, through *upacāra*, by reference to the knowledge that he has acquired, as the *pudgala* is identified by reference to the aggregates.

These examples of persons "born" through the acquisition of some particular knowledge, characteristics or condition are of course reminiscent of the explanations of conception according to the present in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* and the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*. It is possible, then, that we have missed the point of these explanations. Perhaps they are not meant to be examples of conception according to the present, but only to indicate the kind of conception that is involved in it: a person is conceived according to the present as a master of enchantment is conceived according to his magical powers, or as a rich man is conceived according to his wealth. The "present" according to which the person is conceived would of course be the present aggregates, regarded in this case not as possessions but as acquisitions.

The distinction between the person conceived according to the basis and the person conceived according to the present would thus be a matter of perspective. In each case, the person is conceived according to the present aggregates. But in

conception according to the basis, the aggregates are seen as already belonging to the person as its current support, whereas in conception according to the present, they are seen as acquired by the person in coming into its present existence. In the one case, the person is conceived as currently existing; in the other, as having been born in the present. In this way, conception according to the present can also be understood as involving transition, the transition of the *pudgala* to the aggregates of its present life.

Before we leave the three kinds of conception of the person, let us look again at Paramārtha's Chinese translation of Vasumitra's account of the Pudgalavāda. It may be recalled that in Paramārtha's version, there is added to its statement of the doctrine of the *pudgala* the following explanation:

> There are three kinds of concept: first, the concept comprehending the whole; secondly, the concept comprehending a part; and thirdly, the concept comprehending cessation. (T2033, 21c22)

Three kinds of concept, and the third based on cessation: these must surely be the three kinds of conception which we have been considering. But what of the first two? The "concept comprehending the whole" might certainly be equivalent to the first kind of conception, that "based on" the aggregates, since the present aggregates taken as a whole are the basis for this kind of conception. That does not mean, of course, that the term which Paramārtha had in mind was '*upādāyaprajñapti*'; the expression which he uses, "一切 *yíqiè*", "whole" or "all", could hardly be a translation of '*upādāya*'. But whatever the term in the tradition on which Paramārtha's explanation is based, its import appears to be similar to that of the corresponding term in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* and the *Sāṃmitīya-nikāyaśāstra*.

The second concept is more difficult to account for. How can "a part" (一分 *yí fèn*) indicate either the transition of a sentient being or the transference of a concept? Neither the occupations and possessions nor the former and future lives of a person would normally be described as *part* of the person. It is true that using a part to identify the whole would be a form of *upacāra*, but if Paramārtha understood the doctrine he was referring to, why would he choose this way of translating the term? It is surely significant that he never seems to have used '一分 *yí fèn*' as an equivalent for '*upacāra*' in his translation of the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*.[26] The fact that '分 *fèn*' can also mean "share" or "lot" does not seem to help very much; even if occupation and so on might be considered a person's lot,

26 Hirakawa, 1973: 1.101; 2.26.

why specify *one* lot or share? It is thus by no means certain that "一分 *yí fèn*" represents '*upacāra*', or for that matter what else it could represent that would be a definition of the second kind of conception. The meaning of "concept comprehending a part" remains unclear; the most we can say, I think, is that it may not be actually inconsistent with the interpretation of the second kind of conception as "*upacāraprajñapti*".

Some other information concerning the *pudgala* can be gathered from our non-Pudgalavādin sources. There was the question of how the *pudgala* could be an object of consciousness, of how one could be aware of it at all, if it was not included among the *dharmas* which the Buddha had identified as the objects of the six kinds of consciousness (visual, aural, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental). The *Vijñānakāya* suggests that the Pudgalavādins may claim that there is a seventh kind of consciousness, consciousness of the sentient being (有情之識 *yǒuqíng zhī shì*, *sattvavijñāna*), which the Buddha knew but chose not to declare (T 1539, 544a2f., 11).[27] A number of our other sources, the *Tattvasiddhi* (T1646, 260a13ff., c6),[28] the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB 9; DS ed. 1195.18–1201.10)[29] and the *Madhyamakāvatāra* (6.146),[30] ascribe to the Pudgalavādins the opinion that the *pudgala* is an object for all of the six kinds of consciousness, that in seeing the physical form of a person one is also seeing the person, who is after all not separate from the physical form. It seems likely that this is in fact the position which they generally adopted, but it is certainly possible that for a time, at least, some of the Pudgalavādins held that there is a seventh kind of consciousness. It is also possible, however, that the *Vijñānakāya* merely offers this as a position to which the Pudgalavādins might turn when their actual position proved untenable; part of the debater's art, after all, is to anticipate the opponent's arguments. The fact that the *Vijñānakāya* also suggests that the Pudgalavādins may claim that there is a fifth basis for mindfulness, a basis for mindfulness of the sentient being (T 1539, 544b22ff.),[31] a doctrine likewise ascribed to them nowhere else, may indicate that these are indeed no more than anticipations of the extremes to which the Pudgalavādins might eventually be driven.

27 La Vallée Poussin, 1923: 368.

28 Aiyaswami Sastri, 1978: 71, 74.

29 Stcherbatsky, 1970: 21–29; La Vallée Poussin, 1971: 5.238–244; Duerlinger, 1989: 143–149.

30 La Vallée Poussin, 1911: 313.

31 La Vallée Poussin, 1923: 369.

The *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* quotes, apparently directly, from a *Vātsīputrīyābhidharma*: "The *pudgala* is included in a fifth, inexpressible category of *dharmas*" (T1509, 61a24f.). This is explained in the *Tattvasiddhi*:

> The *dharmas* which may be known are called the five categories of *dharmas*: the past, future, present, uncreated and inexpressible *dharmas*. The self is in the fifth [category of] *dharmas*. (T1646. 260c9f.)

The past, future and present *dharmas* are of course the created *dharmas* of the three times; the uncreated *dharma* is Nirvana. The *pudgala* (here referred to as the self) is in a separate category, the inexpressible, which is neither created nor uncreated. This doctrine appears also in the *Zhōng lùn* (中論: T1564, 15c28f.), and in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB 9; DS ed. 1195.8–10).

This recalls the question that we raised earlier, of whether the *pudgala* was thought of as a *dharma*. Here it seems clear enough that the *pudgala is* a *dharma*, though one which is neither temporal nor uncreated. But there is a passage in the *Sāmmitīyanikāyaśāstra* which seems to distinguish between *pudgalas* and *dharmas*:

> There are two kinds of doctrine taught by the Buddha. What are the two? The first concerns *dharmas* (法 *fǎ*) and the second concerns the sentient being (眾生 *zhòngshēng*, *sattva*). (T1649, 469a17)

And in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, Vasubandhu suggests that the view of the Pudgalavādins may be that "the *pudgala* is said to be neither a *dharma* nor different from a *dharma*" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1204.4), this following from the *pudgala*'s indeterminate relationship with the aggregates.

That the *pudgala* is the author of its actions and the enjoyer of their results is stated explicitly in the *Vijñānakāya* (T1539, 542c24ff.),[32] the *Kathāvatthu* (KV 1.1.212)[33] and the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* (TSP 336; DS ed. 159.20f.),[34] and is implied, of course, in many other passages. The *pudgala* is also identified as the knower of all *dharmas* in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (T1545, 42c19f.) and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB 9; DS ed. 1205.4f.);[35] thus without the *pudgala* the omniscience of the Buddha would be impossible. In the *Mahāvibhāṣā* the

32 La Vallée Poussin, 1923: 364.

33 Aung and Rhys Davids, 1960: 47.

34 Jhā, 1937: 1.217.

35 Stcherbatsky, 1970: 37; La Vallée Poussin, 1971: 5.254; Duerlinger, 1989: 153.

Pudgalavādins are also represented as maintaining that the *pudgala* is the basis for memory (T1545, 55a18–21).

Finally, in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, the Vātsīputrīyas are quoted as saying:

> Just as there is the *dharma* "eye" through the combination of the four material elements (*mahābhūta*), so there is the *dharma* "*pudgala*" through the combination of the five aggregates. (T1509, 61a21f.)

What is interesting here is that the *pudgala* is identified as a *dharma*, and is compared to the eye, a *dharma* which as one of the twelve spheres (*āyatana*) is acknowledged to be real, although, like the *pudgala*, it exists only through the combination of other *dharmas*.

Let us pause now to summarize what we have been able to establish thus far. The *pudgala* is a kind of self which is inexpressible in the sense that it cannot be said to be either the same as the aggregates, spheres and elements or different from them. Error concerning the self is accordingly the opinion that the self is the same as the aggregates and so on, that it is different from them, or that it does not exist. The *pudgala* in fact exists, and is what passes from one life to another; it is not non-existent even in Parinirvana. It is known through all of the six kinds of consciousness, and forms a distinct, fifth category of things that are knowable. It is the author of its actions and the enjoyer of their results. It is conceived in three ways: on the basis of the aggregates and so on, according to its transition (or by transference from what belongs to it), and according to its cessation. Although it exists, there is some suggestion that it may be conceptual.

This last point is rather puzzling. The view of non-Pudgalavādin schools such as the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda is precisely that the person exists as a conceptual entity, which is to say that it does not exist as something real. If this should prove also to be the view of the Pudgalavāda, what distinguishes the Pudgalavāda from these other schools? Why should the Vātsīputrīyas, the Sāṃmitīyas and the rest be described as "Pudgalavādins"? We need first to confirm that the Pudgalavādins actually identified the *pudgala* with the self, as they certainly appear to have done, and then to determine whether they held it to be real or conceptual, and if the latter, what was distinctive about their understanding of the *pudgala* as a conceptual entity. But for this we shall have to turn to other passages in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and to some of our other sources, in works critical of the Pudgalavāda.

Chapter 5

The Reality of the *Pudgala*

THE Pudgalavadins held that the *pudgala,* the person, is in some sense real, and is neither the same as the five aggregates nor different from them. As we have noted already, it seemed obvious to Buddhists of the other schools that the Buddha had shown the unreality of the self, and that recognition of the self's unreality lay at the core of his teaching and was essential for the attainment of Nirvana. To them, it seemed that the Pudgalavādins had betrayed the most fundamental principle of Buddhism, the doctrine that distinguished Buddhism from all other teachings; to the Pudgalavādins, obviously, it did not. The question that we must ask is what the position of the Pudgalavādins actually was: did they in fact affirm the reality of the self, or did they affirm the reality of the *pudgala* as something different from a self? And in what sense did they affirm its reality?

To Śāntarakṣita and his commentator, Kamalaśīla, the matter seemed clear enough. "Some who consider themselves Buddhists," says Śāntarakṣita, "declare the self (*ātman*) under the designation of '*pudgala*'" (TS 336; DS ed. 159. 5f.) and Kamalaśīla explains,

> This is the definition of self: the self is that which is the doer of good and bad kinds of deeds and the enjoyer of the results, pleasant and unpleasant, of the deeds done by itself, and which transmigrates by relinquishing its former aggregates and appropriating other, subsequent aggregates, and which is the enjoyer; and all this they affirm also of the *pudgala*, disagreeing only as to the name. (DS ed. 159.20–23)

The implication is that the Pudgalavādins teach the reality of that same (illusory) self which the non-Buddhists misguidedly affirm, but they seek to conceal their heterodoxy by calling the self by a different name. The name, of course, is immaterial; anyone who attends to what they say about the *pudgala* will recognize it for what it is.

In actuality, however, the Pudgalavādins seem to have made no secret of the *pudgala*'s identity. In the *Vijñānakāya*, one of our earliest sources, the Pudgalavādin is represented as saying, "There is a self (*ātman*), a sentient being (*sattva*), a living being (*jīva*), a being who is born (*jantu*), a being who is

nourished (*poṣa*), an individual (*puruṣa*), a *pudgala*" (T 1539, 542c24f.).[1] Here 'self' and '*pudgala*' seem clearly to be synonymous. That they are part of what is obviously meant to be an exhaustive list of equivalent terms makes it very unlikely that we are mistaken in our interpretation. The Pudgalavādins evidently asserted the reality of the self, and were willing to identify it by any of the terms current among their non-Buddhist contemporaries, such as the Jains (*jīva*) and the Sāṃkhyas (*puruṣa*).

This impression is confirmed by the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*. We have already seen that the various misinterpretations of the person are explained in terms of the self; the "wrong view", for example, that the expressions 'physical form' and 'person who acquires the physical form' are merely synonyms is said to be an error of stating that there is no self (T1649, 466b16). But in fact the whole section in which theories of other schools are presented and then refuted uses the two terms interchangeably; for example,

> In the view of those schools, the Buddha said that "there is the person...," and therefore we see that the self exists. (T1649, 463a13)

And similarly,

> In the view of those schools, because "one person is born", therefore the self exists. (T1649, 463a18)

In several passages they occur in apposition:

> Furthermore, various schools say that the five aggregates are the person, are the self. (T1649, 463a19)

> But if the person exists, if the self exists, there are no reasons as stated above. (T1649, 465a25)

These are reminiscent of Gopa's treatise, which according to the biography of Xuánzàng affirmed the reality of the self and the person. In another passage, both are in apposition to "living being" (命 *mìng*, *jīva*):

> If the person, the living being, the self is [supposed to be] different [from the five aggregates], that is not evident in this sutra. (T1649, 465b4)

1 There is a similar list of terms in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB 9; DS ed. 1202.2f.).

Finally, there is a passage that identifies the person with the "sentient being" (眾生 *zhòngshēng*, *sattva*):

> They rely on the Buddha's statement, "I observe the fall and rebirth of sentient beings." Therefore, on the basis of the Buddha's statement that it falls and is reborn, the person is [held to be] impermanent. (T1649, 464a10)

That the Chinese terms "人 *rén*" and "我 *wǒ*" in fact represent '*pudgala*' (person) and '*ātman*' (self) respectively is clear from a number of passages. "一人生 *yì rén shēng*" (T1649, 463a18), "One person is born," for example, is quoted from a sutra which has survived in Pali: "*ekapuggalo bhikkhave loke uppajjamāno uppajjati bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya*..." (A i 22), "One person, monks, is born in the world for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many...." And in the sentence, "若言有人名為我見 *Ruò yán yǒu rén míng wéi wǒjiàn*" (T1649, 464c20), "If the person is said to exist, that is called 'view of self'," there can be no doubt that "我見 *wǒjiàn*" represents the term '*ātmadṛṣṭi*', "view of self". The equivalence of '*pudgala*' and '*ātman*', for the Sāṃmitīyas, at least, seems thus to be definitely established.

Some of our other sources also indicate clearly that the *pudgala* was identified with the self, and by the Vātsīputrīyas as well as the Sāṃmitīyas. The commentary on the *Kathāvatthu* defines the *pudgala* as "self, sentient being, living being" (KVA 9), and the *Kathāvatthu* itself bases one of its arguments (KV 1.1.156)[2] on the identity, admitted by the Pudgalavādin, of *pudgala* and *jīva* (living being). The *Tattvasiddhi* in its presentation of the *pudgalavāda* of the Vātsīputrīyas (T1646, 260b15) explicitly identifies self (我 *wǒ*, *ātman*) and *pudgala* (人 *rén*). The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* generally uses '*pudgala*', but at one point it represents the Vātsīputrīya as citing a scriptural passage to the effect that denial of the self (*ātman*) is a form of wrong view (AKB 9; DS ed. 1213.14),[3] a passage which would have no bearing on the argument if self and *pudgala* were to be distinguished. It would appear, then, that the Pudgalavādins in general believed that in affirming the *pudgala*, they were also affirming the reality of the self.

But in what sense did they affirm the reality of the self? In the *Kathāvatthu* (1.1.1), the Pudgalavādin is asked whether the *pudgala* is apprehended "as something true and ultimate (*saccikaṭṭhaparamatthena*)" and replies that it is; and the Pudgalavādin in the *Vijñānakāya* (T1539, 537b2) seems to have affirmed the

2 Nālandā ed. 1.1.67; p. 32.

3 Stcherbatsky, 1970: 53; La Vallée Poussin, 1971: vol. 5, 270; Duerlinger, 1989: 161.

pudgala in similar terms (諦義勝義 *dìyì shèngyì*). According to the commentary on the *Kathāvatthu*, the "true" and the "ultimate" are respectively "the actual (*bhūtattha*), which is not to be apprehended as unreal, like an illusion, a mirage and so on", and "the highest sense(*uttamattha*), which is not to be apprehended as hearsay and so on" (KVA 9). The *pudgala*, then, is not supposed to be illusory or merely traditional; it is not simply how the five aggregates of our constitution appear to the unenlightened, nor is it merely the five aggregates conventionally referred to as a whole. It is held (as the commentary puts it) to have "its own actuality" and to be "directly present" (KVA 10).

Later Buddhist writers make a distinction between substantial entities (*dravya*) and conceptual entities (*prajñapti*); Vasubandhu, for example, explains in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* that if something is a distinct entity, like physical form (*rūpa*), its existence is substantial; if it is a combination of other things, like milk, its existence is conceptual (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.1f.).[4] It might seem obvious that if the *pudgala* is supposed to be "true and ultimate", it must, according to this later distinction, be a substantial entity and not merely conceptual. Many of the arguments in the *Kathāvatthu* are based on the assumption that if the *pudgala* is "true and ultimate", it must be either identical with one of the other realities taught by the Buddha (such as physical form) or it must be something separate, separately perceived. But the Pudgalavādins insist that it is neither the same as physical form and the other aggregates nor different from them; it is thus not a distinct entity. Either their belief was that the *pudgala* could be indeterminate and yet substantial, or else they held it to be conceptual and yet "true and ultimate".

We have already noted some passages which appeared to indicate that the Pudgalavādins regarded the *pudgala* as conceptual. Another passage in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* (strictly speaking, two related passages) seems to confirm this:

> For what further reason do they say that the self is non-existent? Because of the statement that it does not exist.The Fortunate One was speaking with the *brahmacarin* Śreṇika (先尼梵志 Xiānní fànzhì), [who said,] "According to the truth of the Dharma seen by the Teacher, it is said in conformity with reality that the self does not exist." The Fortunate One said, "One who sees thus I declare to be Teacher, Tathāgata, Arhat,

[4] Stcherbatsky, 1970: 13; La Vallée Poussin, 1971: vol. 5, 232; Duerlinger, 1989: 138.

> Samyaksaṃbuddha."[5] In the view of these schools, because of his statement that it does not exist, therefore the self is non-existent. (T1649, 462b11–15)

> Now we reply, the synonyms (相從 *xiāngcóng*, *paryāya*)[6] 'self' and so on are accepted. As the Buddha said to the *tīrthakas*, "Although the self exists, it is conceptual; the self is not substantial. The self is spoken of on the basis of the existing impure aggregates."[7] With regard to the *dharmas* that go and come, the Buddha spoke of the self, but it is not a substantial self. As the Buddha said, "According to whatever formations (行 *xìng*, *saṃskāra*) it is based on it receives its name."[8] Therefore the Buddha spoke of a conceptual self. (T1649, 464b5–10)

There is also a passage in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* which might seem on the contrary to affirm the substantiality of the *pudgala*. It purports to be an argument *against* the opinion that the self exists substantially (or in reality: 實有我 *shí yǒu wǒ*) but ends by stating, "Therefore in reality the self exists" (是故實有我 *shì gù shí yǒu wǒ*).

> For what further reason do they say that the self exists? Because "one person goes forth from the world for the obtaining of peace and happiness by many people." The Buddha said to the monks that "with every virtuous person born in the world, many people obtain peace and happiness." So if the person does not exist, who is it that is born and is virtuous? In the view of these schools, because "one person is born", therefore the self exists. (T1649, 463aL4-18)

> Now we reply, the Buddha said that there is the concept (or designation) of the person; therefore this is its concomitant (其朋 *qí péng*, *tad-anuvartin*). If non-self (無我 *wúwǒ*, *nairātmya*) were really the non-

[5] A somewhat similar passage, in which the Buddha speaks to Seniya (the Pali cognate of 'Śreṇika', is cited in the *Kathāvatthu* (1.1.243); it does not appear to be in our present Pali Canon (*Points of Controversy*, 62, n. 5). It is just possible that Śreṇika is Vatsagotra; the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* gives Vatsagotra's personal name as "Śreṇika" (先尼婆蹉衢多羅 Xiānní Pócuōqúduōluó: T1509, 61b20f.; Lamotte, 1944: 1.46).

[6] See above, p. 64, n. 11.

[7] I have not been able to find the source for this quotation. Note that it is the *impure* aggregates that are the basis for speaking of the self. This seems to suggest that someone whose aggregates are pure cannot properly be spoken of as a self.

[8] This seems to be the same passage from a discourse to Pāpaya quoted at T1649, 466b4f. See above, p. 63.

> existence of the self, there could not be any killing of a living being or one who kills or anyone who is killed. Neither would there be theft, and so also for sexual misconduct, lying and drinking intoxicants.... Neither would there be any doer or any deed (業 *yè, karman*), or any consequences.... Thus the Four Noble Truths also would not exist. If the Four Noble Truths did not exist, there would also be no Buddha teaching the Four Noble Truths. If there were no Buddha, there would also be no Sangha. Thus if the person did not exist, the Three Jewels and the Four Truths would also be non-existent. But such statements are utterly unreasonable. Thus if the person did not exist, the above errors would be established and further errors would also be produced. But if the person exists, if the self exists, there are no errors as stated above. One should understand truly according to the sutras spoken by the Buddha. Therefore in reality the self exists. (T1649, 465a16–b1)

Like so much of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, this is not easy to interpret. The passage ends with what appears to be an affirmation of the very opinion which it was supposed to refute. But the Buddha's statement that the concept (or designation) of the person exists is surely meant to define the sense in which the *pudgala* can be said to exist: as the concomitant or objective counterpart (as Venkataramanan puts it) of that concept. What follows can then be understood as an explanation of why this conceptual existence of the self, though it is not equivalent to the substantial existence asserted by the schools in question, is also not sheer nonexistence; for if the self were really non-existent, it would not have even the practical existence which the Buddha's teaching necessarily assumes. "Therefore in reality the self exists," not as a reality, as a substance, but in the sense indicated by the Buddha, as a conceptual entity.

It seems clear, then, that the Sāṃmitīyas understood the *pudgala* to be conceptual. Other evidence indicates that this was the view also of the Vātsīputrīyas. Harivarman's *Tattvasiddhi* represents the Vātsīputrīya as acknowledging a sutra which says, "Only as a name, only as a concept, only as common usage do we refer to a self" (T1646, 259a11); he agrees that "it is the combination of the five aggregates that is called the self" (T1646, 259c25). But he then adds,

> Although it is said that the self is only a name and so on, this saying ought to be pondered deeply. (T1646, 259c26)

The Vātsīputrīya seems to accept the same definition of the self as his opponent, and yet evidently has a different understanding of it. What sort of understanding this might be we shall consider later.

All of our earlier sources (or at least, those that have anything to say about the matter) thus indicate that the *pudgala* is conceptual. But in the *Abhidharma-kośabhāṣya* we find the Vātsīputrīya saying that "it exists neither as substantial nor as conceptual: *naiva hi dravyato 'sti nāpi prajñaptitaḥ*" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.7); and in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (92), and in even later works, the *Madhyamakahṛdaya* (3.92),[9] the *Madhyamakāvatāra* (6.146), the *Chéng wéishì lùn* (T1585, 1c16ff.),[10] and the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* (on TS 349; DS ed. 165.14ff.),[11] the position of the Pudgalavāda is assumed to be that the *pudgala* is substantial (*dravya*). The *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, for example, says in criticism of the Pudgalavāda, "The *pudgala* should be spoken of as existing conceptually, but not as substantial" (92b), and the *Madhyamakāvatāra* says, "Some affirm the existence of a substantial *pudgala* which is inexpressible as identical or different, permanent or impermanent, and so on" (6.146ab). It is possible, of course, that these later sources have misrepresented their opponents, Vasubandhu in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* perhaps suggesting that the evasiveness of the Pudgalavādins was unlimited, and the others assuming that if the *pudgala* was supposed to be "true and ultimate" it could only be substantial. But on the whole it seems more likely that there was an actual change in the Pudgalavādins' doctrine: that they began by affirming a *pudgala* or self which was "true and ultimate" and yet conceptual, passed through a stage in which they would not admit that it was either conceptual or substantial, and ended by affirming it as substantial though indeterminate. It is tempting to suppose that they began with a position that was manifestly absurd and were eventually driven, by force of argument, to a position which was perhaps more reasonable but manifestly unbuddhist. But there may after all be more to it than that.

For Buddhists like Vasubandhu, either position is self-contradictory. If the *pudgala* is conceptual, it cannot be "true and ultimate"; if it is substantial, it cannot be indeterminate. But for the Pudgalavādins both positions were evidently acceptable, at least as definitions of an entity whose nature was fundamentally mysterious. That they abandoned the one and adopted the other need not imply any real alteration in their understanding of the *pudgala*; they may simply have decided that its nature could be indicated more effectively by describing it as substantial. The change in their doctrine (if in fact there was one)

9 Iida, 1980: 175; P5255, 5b7; also in *Tarkajvālā*: Iida, 1980: 174; P5256, 36a6f.

10 La Vallée Poussin, 1928: 14; Wei Tat, 1973: 19.

11 Schayer, 1934: 89; Jhā, 1937: 1.225.

may represent no more than a modification of their strategy for its exposition and defence.

In either case, how are we to understand the nature of the *pudgala*? The earlier Pudgalavādins claim that the *pudgala* (or self) is "true and ultimate" and yet conceptual. As a conceptual entity it cannot be determined as either the same as the five aggregates or different from them, but as "true and ultimate" it is non-illusory and directly perceptible, and (we might add) has real functions as the agent of its karma and the subject of perception and recollection. How can one and the same entity be merely conceptual in its nature and yet real in the manner of its interaction with the world around it?

One possibility is that we are not dealing with "one and the same entity". This seems to be the interpretation indicated by Venkataramanan in the notes to his English translation of the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*. In note 28 he says,

> Evidently this self that is not characterized by birth and death is not the conditioned self. It is the self-luminous, absolute, unconditioned self. That the Sāmmitiyas recognized such a self cannot now be doubted.... But the self that is the central topic of our discourse is not this eternal, absolute self but the individual, conditioned self, a self which is really a not-self and yet to which we cling in our ignorance as our real self. (1953: 219)

He refers in note 29 to Stcherbatsky's translation of the critique of the Pudgalavāda in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*:

> To this the Vātsīputrīyas reply: "On the contrary! Passionate love towards the real self is never experienced." And to this Vasubandhu answers: "According to this opinion there can be no love for the pure self; this love appears only when something which is not at all the real self is mistaken for the self. This you consider logical!" By this controversy it appears that the Vātsīputrīyas did recognize an absolute, 'pure' self which strictly cannot be the object of love. (1953: 221)

In further support of this interpretation, he draws attention (in note 28) to the distinction in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* between the *dharmātman* and the *pudgalātman*, suggesting that the *dharmātman* corresponds to the "unconditioned" self of the Pudgalavādins, and goes on to cite further parallels in the literature of the Mahāyāna.

If in fact the Pudgalavādins had a doctrine of two selves, or more accurately, a doctrine of an unconditioned self and a conditioned *pudgala* mistakenly grasped as self, then it might be the "real nature" of the self, "the eternal, the immovable" (1953: 159), that is said to be "true and ultimate", and the *pudgala*, "the individual, conditioned self, a self which is really a not-self", that is said to be conceptual. This hypothesis is not without its attractions. If the Pudgalavāda began as a kind of Brahmanical modification of the Buddha's teaching, an accommodation of the original doctrine of non-self to the assumptions and sensibilities of converts raised in the *ātmavāda* of the Upanishads, then this distinction between a real, unconditioned self and a conditioned illusion of self in what is really not self is exactly what we should expect. That such a distinction could be made in the Mahāyāna is clear, as Venkataramanan points out, from the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (1953: 220); the Pudgalavāda might in this respect have been an anticipation of the Mahāyāna doctrine of the *dharmakāya*, and perhaps even a precedent for it. And if Kuījī's explanation of the *paramārthapudgala* of the Sautrāntikas (YZLS, 0466a2f.)[12] is to be trusted, there was at least one of the Early Schools which taught the existence of a real self beyond the empirical *pudgala* associated with the five aggregates.

The difficulties in this account, however, outweigh its attractions. In the first place, there is nothing in the *Kathāvatthu* or the *Vijñānakāya* to suggest that there are two kinds of self, or even two aspects of the one *pudgala*. According to the *Vijñānakāya*, it is the *pudgala* itself which is also to be called "self", "sentient being" and so on. The arguments against the Pudgalavāda in both works contrast the indeterminacy of the *pudgala*, which may be conceptually the same person even when all of its constituent aggregates have changed, with the determinate nature of other things which are agreed to be "true and ultimate". If it were some other self than the *pudgala* that the Pudgalavādins affirmed as "true and ultimate", then these arguments would be pointless. We cannot be sure, of course, that the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins understood the Pudgalavāda correctly, or that they were very careful in their representation of the Pudgalavādins' views; but any very extreme distortion would surely not have served their purpose, since the Pudgalavādins could then simply have denied that the position which they were attacking had anything to do with the Pudgalavāda.

In the second place, it is hard to imagine why the Pudgalavādins would have characterized the *pudgala* initially as conceptual, presumably referring only to the "conditioned self"; finally as substantial, referring only to the "unconditioned self"; and in the transition from the one stage to the other, as neither substantial nor conceptual, referring to one hardly knows what. Surely if the Pudgalavādins

12 See above, p. 37.

really thought that there were two selves, one real or substantial and the other conceptual, they might have been expected to say so.

There are, of course, the two passages in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* which seem to be the main basis for Venkataramanan's interpretation. At first sight, these passages, at least as Venkataramanan translates them, seem to give some support to his opinion. The first concerns a quotation from one of the sutras:

> The Buddha wanted to elucidate the nature of duḥkha. So he told Kātyāyana, "The birth of duḥkha is the (only) birth and the extinction of duḥkha is the (only) extinction.["] We cannot speak of birth and death as the characters of self. It is thus that the Buddha has said this. (Venkataramanan, 1953: 174)[13]

The second is part of a response to the argument "that there is no self because neither 'I' nor 'mine' can be found in reality":

> That which is made known by others is not the self-known and that which is self-known is not made known by others. Therefore what the Buddha really dismisses is the other-illuminedness of the self-(luminous). He did not deny the self. (1953: 175)[14]

Venkataramanan's note 28 is to the first of these passages; his note 29 is to the second.

How far do these passages really support his interpretation? The circumstance that so fundamental a doctrine as the duality of the self is no more than casually mentioned, and that too in only two passages in the entire work as we now have it, should give us pause. Is it after all likely that the Sāṃmitīyas would have been so reticent about the one doctrine that could make sense (we are to suppose) of their otherwise baffling insistence on the reality of the self? Surely if this were the key to their entire system, it would have been more conspicuously displayed.[15]

Moreover, the passages themselves are not very clear. The first certainly seems to deny that birth and death can be properly predicated of the self. But there is no need to assume that this self which transcends birth and death is an

[13] T1649, 464b2f.

[14] T1649, 464b19f.

[15] On the other hand, an important doctrine may only be indicated obliquely if it seems impossible to state it directly in terms consistent with the remembered teachings of the Buddha. This of course is the kind of problem that could be solved eventually by the appearance of new sutras.

"eternal, absolute self", for a self which is merely conceptual can also be said to transcend birth and death, in the sense that the continuing (and continually changing) formation of the five aggregates which according to Buddhist teaching constitutes our individuality does not come to an end with the destruction of one set of the five aggregates at death, nor is it created with the appearance of a new set of the five aggregates at birth: precisely because it is the conceptual continuity of the stream of its constituents, the *pudgala*, continuing through death and rebirth, can be said to transcend them. But this is a self which, it would seem, even the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins would accept, as long as there was no claim that this conceptual self is also "true and ultimate".

The second passage presents more serious problems. A note in the Chinese text gives '制 *zhì*' as one of the equivalents for '*prajñapta*', and '*prajñapta*' can mean "made known". It was perhaps for that reason that Venkataramanan translated "自制 *zì zhì*" and "他制 *tā zhì*" as "self-known" and "known by others". But '制 *zhì*' means "to order, make, prepare", and so would be used for '*prajñapta*' in the sense of "ordered" or "arranged". If we translate "自制 *zì zhì*" and "他制 *tā zhì*" as "self-made" and "made by another", we can recognize them as equivalent to the Pali "sayaṃkata" and "paraṃkata", which we find in some of the "undetermined questions": whether self and world are self-made, made by another, both or neither, and whether suffering is self-made, made by another, both or neither (D iii 137ff.).[16] Accordingly, "斷自他制 *duàn zì tā zhì*" will not mean, "What the Buddha really dismisses is the other-illuminedness of the self-(luminous)," but rather, "He denies both self- and other-made."

The passage is in any case rather difficult to interpret. I would translate it as follows:

> If it were [really] made by another, it would not be said to be self-made; if it were [really] made by oneself, it would not be said to be made by another. Therefore he denies both self- and other-made. He does not deny the self.

One can speak of one's present self and its suffering either as made by oneself in a previous existence, or as made by the other person that one was at the time of that existence. But either way of putting it is misleading; hence the Buddha's denial that self and the suffering that belongs to it are really either self-made or made by another. The reality has to be understood in terms of dependent origination: what we are now and our present suffering are the result of past moral decisions within the same individual stream of events. For each of us, then, our

[16] See also S ii 19f., quoted above, p. 11.

present individuality and experience have not been formed by any person or being outside of our own stream of constituents—we are not made by another—nor have they been formed by our individuality and experience as they now are—we are not self-made. Events in the past, which we now identify as ourselves as we were then, have given rise to other events in the present, which we now identify as ourselves as we are now. In these separate strands of individuality we can recognize a continuity which is the basis for our moral responsibility, but no permanent, unchanging self to which the successive phases of our personalities and experiences might belong. It seems reasonably clear, then, that the passage is meant to affirm the reality of dependent origination and the conceptual self founded upon it, but not to affirm an "eternal, absolute self".

Without these passages from the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, the case for Venkataramanan's interpretation does not look very strong. Nevertheless, the wording of the short passage he cites from the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* is undeniably suggestive and certainly requires some explanation. In Stcherbatsky's translation, the Vātsīputrīya says, "Passionate love towards the (real) Self is never experienced," and Vasubandhu replies, "According to this opinion there can be no love for the (pure) Self; this love appears only when something which is not at all the real Self is mistaken for the Self" (Stcherbatsky, 1970: 56). Here again the translation is misleading. First we must note that in Stcherbatsky's text 'real' in the first sentence is in parentheses, and so also 'pure' in the second sentence: both words are marked as the translator's interpolations. Stripped of these explanatory additions, the text of the translation already seems less clear, less unequivocal as evidence for Venkataramanan's interpretation. When we look at the original Sanskrit (which was not available to either Stcherbatsky or Venkataramanan) we find that it says nothing about a "real" or "pure" self. Vasubandhu has just argued that belief in a self of any kind will lead to love of self and possessions, of "I" and "mine" (*ātma-* and *ātmīyasneha*). He then continues:

> Perhaps you (the Vātsīputrīyas) suppose that no love at all develops for the self. Now how can this be right, that love for what is not the self arises through firm belief in a self, but no love arises for the self itself? (AKB 9; DS ed. 1215.5f.)

His point, surely, is that the self of the Pudgalavādins is by their own admission a self, even if it is not a separate substance (*dravyāntara*) like the self taught by the non-Buddhists; and so if people love their bodies, for example, in the erroneous

belief that in so doing they are loving themselves, then when they are taught that the *pudgala* is the self, they will love the *pudgala*, whatever its nature is supposed to be, in the same belief that in so doing they are loving themselves. To think otherwise would be like expecting a man who has been eagerly collecting fool's gold in the belief that it is gold to show no interest when real gold is pointed out to him. Vasubandhu is not suggesting that the Vātsīputrīyas believe in an absolute self, but that belief even in the kind of self that the Pudgalavādins accept will have the same disastrous effects as belief in the absolute self of the non-Buddhists.

There remains the passage in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* concerning the two kinds of self, the *dharmātman* and the *pudgalātman*. It is an interesting passage, but it does not indicate that the Sarvāstivādins held anything like a doctrine of an unconditioned self. The passage is in fact the response to a question raised about an apparently common formula:

> Those who are skilled in explaining doctrine say that all *dharmas* constantly possess their real substance, nature, character, self and thinghood, and this is not a wrong view (*mithyā dṛṣṭi*). Why is it that when the non-Buddhists say there is a real self, that is a wrong view?

The author replies:

> There are two kinds of self: the self of a *dharma* and the self of a *pudgala*. Those who are skilled in explaining doctrine say only that the self of a *dharma* really exists, that the nature of a *dharma* (法性 *fǎ xìng*, *dharmatā*, or more probably *dharmasvabhāva*) really exists. This is a true opinion and so it is not called a wrong view. The non-Buddhists say also that the self of a *pudgala* really exists; but the *pudgala* has no nature (性 *xìng*, *svabhāva*) in reality. This is an erroneous opinion and so it is called a wrong view. (T1545, 41a16–22)

The *dharmātman*, the self of a phenomenon, which is the only self that the Sarvāstivādin accepts, is not, strictly speaking, a self at all; it is simply the nature, the determinate identity, of the phenomenon. "Nature" is in fact one of the normal meanings of '*ātman*'. The use of '*ātman*' in this sense must have seemed quite harmless to the Sarvāstivādins, particularly as their usual word for "nature", '*svabhāva*', means literally something like "own-being" or "self-being".

There seems to be no basis, then, for the theory that the Pudgalavādins distinguished between an "individual, conditioned self" and an "eternal, absolute self". But if we are not dealing with two selves, one "true and ultimate" and the other conceptual, what is the alternative?

The difficulty comes from the apparent absurdity of maintaining that the same thing can be both "true and ultimate" and conceptual: the "true and ultimate", we have seen, is non-illusory and directly perceived; the conceptual is a composite, a grouping of constituents which may themselves be either composite or "true and ultimate". The conceptual is illusory to the extent that its constituents are not clearly recognized, so that it appears to exist in its own right, by its *own being*, as it were; it is perceived indirectly in the sense that the grouping of its constituents is defined and recognized through the mediation of language. The mark of an entity that is conceptual is its peculiar relationship to the entities that constitute it: it is not simply those entities themselves, since it consists of the entities taken together as a group; neither, of course, is it another entity apart from them. "True and ultimate" entities on the contrary can always be defined either as the same as some other such entities (in which case there is a single entity called by more than one name) or as different from them. The *pudgala*, according to the Pudgalavādins, is neither the same as the five aggregates nor different from them, and so it is obviously conceptual. Yet the Pudgalavādins also have to insist that it is "true and ultimate"; otherwise their *pudgala* is no more than a useful fiction, and is indistinguishable from the *pudgala* of the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins.

The "true and ultimate" seems to be what is later defined as the substantial (*dravya*) in contrast to the conceptual entity (*prajñapti*). But as we have noted, the Pudgalavādins never claimed that the *pudgala* was both *dravya* and *prajñapti*, substantial and conceptual. According to the evidence we have, they began by calling it conceptual, passed through a stage of denying that it was either conceptual or substantial, and ended by claiming that it was substantial. Is it possible that the identity of the "substantial" with the "true and ultimate" was not at first obvious to them as it seemed obvious to their opponents, and that when it became clear to them that they could not consistently maintain that the *pudgala* was something "true and ultimate" if it was also conceptual and thus insubstantial, they decided that the pudgala must not be conceptual after all?

In fact, the question of whether the *pudgala* is substantial or conceptual is not raised in our earliest sources at all. The *Vijñānakāya* does not seem to have used either of these terms in its critique of the *pudgala*. The *Kathāvatthu* discusses the concept of the *pudgala*, but not the *pudgala* as itself a conceptual entity:

> Is the concept of the person based (*upādāya*) on physical form just as the concept of a shadow is based on the tree [which casts it]? Just as the concept of its shadow is based on the tree, and both the tree and its shadow are impermanent, is the concept of the person based on physical form, and both the physical form and the person are impermanent?
>
> No, one cannot say that....
>
> Just as the concept of its shadow is based on the tree, and the tree is one thing and its shadow another, is the concept of the person based on physical form, and the physical form is one thing and the person is another?
>
> No, one cannot say that.... (KV 1.1.189)[17]

The shadow can be identified as the tree's shadow only by reference to the tree; it is from the tree, then, that the concept of its shadow is derived. And the person can be identified only by reference to physical form and the other aggregates; the concept of the person would thus similarly be derived from the aggregates. Although the Pudgalavādin rejects the conclusions that the Theravādin draws from this analogy, it seems that the analogy itself was accepted by the Pudgalavādins, as the commentary suggests. At this stage, then, the Pudgalavādins are not represented as identifying the *pudgala* with its concept; they seem to hold rather that there is a "true and ultimate" *pudgala* to which the concept of the *pudgala* refers.[18]

But in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the *Tattvasiddhi* the *pudgala* is conceptual. As we have seen, moreover, the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* explicitly denies the substantiality of the self: "Although the self exists, it is conceptual; the self is not substantial"(T1649, 464b6). The distinction that this implies between insubstantiality and non-existence is confirmed by another passage in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*. An opponent has argued that there is no self because it is something insubstantial merely spoken of as though it existed. The author replies,

17 Nālandā ed. 1.1.112; p. 44.

18 As translated by B.C. Law, the commentary seems to compare the concept of the *pudgala* to the shadow itself: "He will have it that the concept of person is derived from material and mental qualities, just as the shadow is derived from the tree, and fire from fuel" (DC 31). But the Pali has "*r[u]kkhaṃ upādāya chāyāya viya indhanaṃ upādāya aggissa viya ca*" (KVA 27), and so it is the concept *of* the shadow and *of* the fire that is meant, as in the *Kathāvatthu* itself. Minayeff's edition (25), which Law translated, has "*chāyā*" instead of "*chāyāya*", although it does have "*aggissa*".

> Since the insubstantial can exist, this assertion that the insubstantial and the non-existent are both alike nonexistent though spoken of as existent is difficult to accept. (T1649, 464b22)

The position of the *Sāmmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, then, seems to be that the *pudgala* or self is conceptual and insubstantial, and yet is something that exists.

The account in the *Tattvasiddhi* may shed some light on the matter. We have already seen that the *Sāmmitīyanikāyaśāstra* argues that "if the self were really non-existent, there could not be any killing of a living being or one who kills or anyone that is killed" (T1649, 465a17). In the *Tattvasiddhi*, Harivarman expands this argument; he represents the Vātsīputrīya as continuing after his acknowledgement that the self is conceptual:

> Although it is said that the self is only a name and so on, this saying ought to be pondered deeply. If living beings are only names, then just as killing a clay ox does not entail the guilt of killing, so if one kills a real ox there should also be no guilt; and as small children who offer gifts in name only have their rewards, so adults who withhold their offerings should likewise receive their rewards; but that is not how it really is. And if the Āryas (the Noble Ones) speak of [the self] as existing when as a mere name it is non-existent, then they are guilty of wrong speech; but the Āryas are so called because they speak according to reality, and so we know that the self exists. And if the Āryas see that in reality the self does not exist and yet following common opinion speak of the self as existing, then [what they declare as] their own view should be erroneous, since they speak at variance [with the truth]. And if following common opinion they speak of it as existing when it does not, then they should not also explain the doctrines of the twelve conditions, the three doorways of emancipation (*vimokṣamukha*),[19] non-self and so on according to their real meaning in the sutras. If some person says that the other world exists, they should agree that it exists; if a person says that it does not exist, they should agree with that person that it does not exist. They ought to agree with all of the [non-Buddhist] scriptures containing every kind of false view, such as that everything in the world is produced by a supreme god. But this is not admissible. Thus the scriptural evidence which you have adduced has been comprehensively refuted, and so it is not the case that the self does not exist. (T1646, 259c26–260a9)

19 According to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB 8.25b; DS ed. 11651–3), these are the three *samādhis*, emptiness, the wishless and the signless, in their pure form.

Although the Vātsīputrīya acknowledges, then, that the self is conceptual, he rejects the conclusion that his opponent would draw from this, that the self does not really exist. His argument is that although the self is a conceptual entity, it is not merely fictitious, first, because good or bad treatment of a living being has real consequences in this life and the next, whereas good or bad treatment of a merely fictitious being does not; and secondly, because the Āryas (who teach the truth) taught the existence of various kinds of person, but under no circumstances taught the existence of such commonly accepted philosophical and religious figments as a creator god. For the Vātsīputrīya, an entity that is conceptual can exist, whereas one that is purely fictitious does not.

His opponent's position seems at first sight to be identical. Toward the end of the discussion, Harivarman explains, "We say that the concept of the combination of the five aggregates is the self.... It is not that the concept does not exist; it is only that it is not something substantial." Where then is the disagreement? For the Vātsīputrīya also says that the self is the combination of the five aggregates, and he certainly does not reject the Buddha's statement that the self is conceptual or nominal. If the outcome of his "deep pondering" of this statement is the recognition that the self exists, but only conceptually, why should Harivarman be concerned about it? Surely from his standpoint the Vātsīputrīya is merely discovering the obvious.

But the Vātsīputrīya seems willing to say things about the self which Harivarman is not. He says that the self is neither the same as the five aggregates nor different from them; that it is cognized by all six forms of consciousness (visual, aural, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental); and that it is neither past, future, present nor unconditioned (and thus timeless), but indescribable. Harivarman's objection to these statements is no doubt that they foster the illusion that the self is after all something substantial. Its indeterminacy, which for Harivarman is the sign of its insubstantiality, seems here to be put forward as the actual nature of a real thing. Both agree that a conceptual entity can exist; they apparently disagree in their understanding of what the existence of a conceptual entity amounts to.

Early in the discussion, Harivarman defines his position as follows:

> If we said that according to worldly truth there is no self, but according to ultimate truth the self exists, that would be an error; but in fact we say that according to ultimate truth it does not exist, while according to worldly truth it exists; and so there is no fault. (T1646, 259b29–c2)

Harivarman accepts the existence of the self as a conceptual entity, but only in terms of "worldly truth". It seems that the Vātsīputrīya wants on the contrary to affirm the existence of the self as "true and ultimate". For Harivarman, the self cannot be "true and ultimate", cannot exist according to "ultimate truth", unless it is substantial, that is to say, non-conceptual; hence his insistence that the self, as a conceptual entity, is necessarily unreal. For the Vātsīputrīya, the self can be unreal (as the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* seems to acknowledge) in the sense that it is conceptual and thus insubstantial, and yet at the same time real in the sense that it is "true and ultimate".

How can something conceptual be "true and ultimate"? The Vātsīputrīya has argued that the self, although conceptual, can be treated well or badly with consequences that differ accordingly, and (as we know from other sources) that it is the creator of karma and the enjoyer of its results, whereas a purely fictitious entity can enter into no real relationships at all. The criterion for being "true and ultimate" seems to be causal efficiency.

Harivarman, of course, would assign causal efficiency exclusively to the substantial entities upon which the concept of the self is based. It is not the person who wields the axe, for example, but the particular combinations of the four material elements which we grasp conceptually as hands, directed by the will in accordance with feeling, perception and consciousness. For Harivarman (and for the Theravādins, Sarvāstivādins and Sautrāntikas), talking about a person is simply an inexact but convenient way of talking about the five aggregates; the person is nothing but the five aggregates themselves taken together conceptually, and whatever is said about the person ought to be translatable into statements about the five aggregates. What is said about the five aggregates (when they are properly identified) can be exact and unambiguous; what is said about the person is necessarily vague, since what we call a person is in reality a constantly changing composite of other entities. But the reality itself is not vague, and a true statement, strictly speaking, is one which represents this determinate reality exactly.

In the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, as we have already noted, the Vātsīputrīya is no longer represented as saying that the *pudgala* is conceptual, but rather that "it exists neither as substantial nor as conceptual" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.7). Now if substantial entities are separate things that exist in their own right and conceptual entities are those that consist of a combination of other entities, conceptual or substantial, it is hard to imagine what third kind of entity is left; Vasubandhu (the author of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*) might be forgiven for supposing that the Vātsīputrīya was simply trying to be evasive. And in fact the manner in which the Vātsīputrīya's opinion is introduced, after Vasubandhu has

offered the two obvious alternatives (that the *pudgala* is substantial and that it is conceptual) and has shown that neither can be accepted by a Pudgalavādin, makes it appear that the Vātsīputrīya, confronted by the impossibility of his situation, is now struggling to find some way, however absurd, to salvage his doctrine.

But here again we should be wary of accepting too readily the outlook of the Pudgalavādins' opponents. Certainly the Vātsīputrīya's contention that the pudgala is neither conceptual nor substantial seems absurd; everything we have seen so far, from the Pudgalavādins as well as from their opponents, suggests that if something is neither conceptual nor substantial, it is not an entity at all. But we should not rule out the possibility that the Vātsīputrīya's assertion is meant seriously, and that there is something in it that may after all deserve our consideration.

The Vātsīputrīya explains that "the pudgala is conceived by appropriating the present aggregates appropriated as internal" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.7f.); that is, one's self is not simply one's body, feelings and so on, and is not simply one's conception of oneself; but both the self and the conception of it are based on one's own body, feelings and so on as they exist from moment to moment. He offers the analogy of fire:

> And how is fire conceived on the basis of fuel? Fire is not conceived without its fuel, nor can the fire be conceived as different from its fuel, nor as not different. For if they were different, the fuel would not be hot; but if they were not different, what is burned would be the same as what burns it. And so the *pudgala* is not conceived without the aggregates, nor can it be affirmed as different from the aggregates, since that would imply that it is eternal, nor as not different, since that would imply that it suffers annihilation. (AKB 9; DS ed. 1193.5–9)

The Vātsīputrīya seems to be arguing, then, that fire (like the *pudgala*) is neither substantial nor conceptual. It is not substantial because its relation to its fuel is indeterminate; it is not conceptual, presumably, because it is not simply the fuel itself conceived in a particular way, but something which is supported by the fuel and which we conceive specifically as a wood fire, a grass fire or the like, according to the kind of fuel which supports it.

The same analogy is offered by the Vātsīputrīya in the *Tattvasiddhi*, for whom the *pudgala* is conceptual. Are we to assume, then, that at that time the Vātsīputrīyas held fire also to be conceptual? At least they must have seen in fire something of the same ambiguity which they ascribed to the *pudgala*: a fire is an entity which appears and continues on the basis of its fuel and is conceived in

terms of its fuel, and yet has its own existence and function, which persist even when the fire passes on to new fuel of a different kind. Their uncertainty about the ontological status of the *pudgala* seems to have been matched by a similar uncertainty concerning fire.

Harivarman and Vasubandhu were free of any such uncertainty, and their response to the Vātsīputrīyas' argument is basically the same. Fire is heat, and heat is an element in the fuel. The fire is different from the other elements in the fuel, but identical with the element of heat. Its relation to the fuel is not indeterminate, but will be determined according to how the fuel is defined, either as the elements other than the heat or as the element of heat itself (as constituting the combustibility of the fuel). Fire is, quite simply, substantial; it is identical with its own nature, which is heat, and is different from anything with which it is not identical. The *pudgala* ought accordingly to be substantial, self-identical and different from all other entities, such as the five aggregates upon which it is supposed to be based. But if the *pudgala* is substantial and different from the five aggregates, if it is determinate, the characteristic doctrine of the Pudgalavādins has to be abandoned, and the self whose reality they teach becomes indistinguishable from that of the non-Buddhists.

As they present it, the response of Harivarman and Vasubandhu seems entirely reasonable, and their conclusions inescapable. Fire can be understood as a substance bearing a determinate relationship to the substances upon which it depends; the self to which the Vātsīputrīya compares it must similarly be substantial and determinate in its relationships; otherwise the analogy fails entirely and the self must be acknowledged to be merely conceptual. The contention that the *pudgala* is neither substantial nor conceptual is left without any foundation whatsoever.

No doubt more could be said in defense of the Vātsīputrīya's position, and perhaps more *was* said; as always, we are at the mercy of our sources. But the fact that the later works without exception assume the Pudgalavādins to be claiming that the *pudgala* is substantial suggests that they may have abandoned the attempt to establish a third ontological category besides the substantial and the conceptual, and tried instead to expand the notion of the substantial to include an entity whose relationships were indeterminate. Not surprisingly, their opponents refused to accept any such modification of their notion of substantiality, and insisted that if the *pudgala* is substantial, it must be either the same as the five aggregates or different from them; if it were the same, it would not be the *pudgala* but simply the aggregates themselves, and if it were different, it would be a self such as the non-Buddhists teach; if it is neither the

same nor different, as the Pudgalavādins maintain, it is not substantial at all, but conceptual.

What remains constant throughout the various accounts of the Pudgalavādins' doctrines is their insistence that the *pudgala* or self is "true and ultimate", and that its relation to the five aggregates is indeterminate. When confronted with the question of whether it is conceptual or substantial, they waver, seeing at first no inconsistency in holding the view that it is "true and ultimate" and yet conceptual, then apparently recognizing the unsatisfactoriness of both categories as generally understood, and finally driven to assert its substantiality, as the only way in which they could guarantee its truth and ultimacy while still insisting on the indeterminacy of its relationships. They maintain that it is "true and ultimate" in the special sense that its existence and functions are not reducible to those of its constituents; its relation to the five aggregates is indeterminate because, although it is not reducible to them, neither is it independent of them. The *pudgala* or self of each individual is thus single, a unity formed by a particular combination of the five aggregates and persisting through all the changes of its impermanent constituents: it is the author of its own deeds and continues as the enjoyer of their results.

Chapter 6

Truths

BUDDHISM generally distinguishes between two truths, an ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*) consisting of exact statements about real entities and a worldly or popular truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) consisting of necessarily vague statements about conceptual groupings of real entities. The distinction between them allows us to identify any statement of the Buddha's as either an exact and, so to speak, technical expression of the truth, or an inexact expression of what is ultimately the same truth in the convenient terms of ordinary discourse. Since the latter can always be translated into the former, any conflict between the two kinds of statement, between ultimate truth and worldly truth, is only apparent. As the schools we now think of as orthodox understand it, everything the Buddha said about selves and *pudgalas*, false if misconstrued as referring to real entities, has its share of truth as a useful though potentially misleading expression of what elsewhere he stated with precision: that the five aggregates recur in a coherent series according to the principle of dependent origination.

As we have seen, then, Harivarman acknowledges that the self exists, but only according to "worldly truth"; according to the "ultimate truth" there is no self, but only the five aggregates. That the self exists only according to the conventions of worldly truth seems to follow inevitably from its being a conceptual entity: if it were something ultimate, it would be identical with itself and different from everything else; it would be determinate and substantial. The identification of ultimate truth with what is substantial and conventional truth with what is conceptual seems to have been widely accepted, and that is hardly surprising: the substantial, which is self-identical and distinct, cannot be reduced to anything else and is in that sense ultimate; the conceptual is simply a particular group of associated substantial *dharmas* (or of associated groups of substantial *dharmas*) gathered together under a single term, and so has no existence in itself (*svabhāva*) but is entirely reducible to the *dharmas* of which it consists. Concepts are essentially designations (conventional in the sense in which language is conventional) by which real, substantial entities can be grouped together and handled more efficiently in thought, and conceptual entities are simply the real entities themselves as conventionally organized. The conceptual entity as any kind of reality in its own right is an illusion.

On this basis it seems to make no sense to say that a conceptual entity is "true and ultimate". The very nature of a concept (as here understood) seems to preclude its being ultimate.

If the Pudgalavādins maintain that the self is conceptual and yet "true and ultimate", it would seem that they include within ultimate truth a large part at least of what others would assign to worldly or conventional truth. Did they perhaps not admit the distinction between the two truths at all? They seem to insist that when the Buddha spoke of selves or persons, what he said was quite simply true, without any qualification. But if statements about the self are true in the same way as statements about the five aggregates, it is hard to see what basis there can be for distinguishing between the two truths, or what point there can be in trying to make the distinction. If everything that the Buddha taught is to be regarded as ultimate truth, then worldly truth (if it exists at all) will consist only of facts irrelevant to the pursuit of Nirvana and perhaps also, by a dubious courtesy, the popular falsehoods and superstitions associated with the non-Buddhist traditions.

But such a position is difficult to maintain. The Buddha himself is supposed to have distinguished between sutras whose meaning is explicit (*nītārtha*) and sutras whose meaning is implicit (*neyārtha*) and requires explication.

> These two, monks, slander the Tathāgata. Which two? He who explains a sutra whose meaning is implicit as one whose meaning is explicit, and he who explains a sutra whose meaning is explicit as one whose meaning is implicit. These indeed, monks, slander the Tathāgata. (A i 60)

Another sutra, mentioned by Vasubandhu in his critique of the Pudgalavāda (AKB 9; DS ed. 1202.9) and quoted in Yaśomitra's commentary (1202.25–28), uses the same terms:

> Monks, there are four refuges. What are the four? The Teaching is a refuge, not the person. The meaning is a refuge, not the expression. The sutra whose meaning is explicit is a refuge, not the one whose meaning is implicit. Knowledge is a refuge, not consciousness.[1]

A sutra whose meaning is only implicit is presumably not ultimate truth, at least until suitably interpreted; without the necessary explanation, it is liable to mislead and so is not a secure refuge. That some sutras do in fact require

1 Wogihara ed. 704; La Vallée Poussin, 1971: vol. 5, 246, n. 2. Dwarikadas Shastri mistakenly repeats "*pudgalaḥ*" for "*vyañjanam*".

explication and thus cannot be taken literally as ultimate truth has the authority of the Buddha. Anyone who insisted on taking everything the Buddha said as ultimate truth would surely be committed to accepting these sutras (unless they could be shown not to be genuine) in which the Buddha indicates that not everything that he said is ultimate truth.

Might these sutras which distinguish between explicit and implicit meaning in the Buddha's teaching be in fact later additions to the canon reflecting a growing concern with problems of interpretation? Possibly; the fact that these two terms ('*nītārtha*' and '*neyārtha*') appear so rarely in the canonical literature would tend to support such an assumption. But there can be no doubt that the Buddha himself was aware of the need for interpretation; a significant part of his teaching seems to have been devoted to correcting misunderstandings that had arisen on the basis of what he had previously said. And we have already seen that he recognized that our common forms of expression, particularly with regard to the person, can be misleading:

> For these, Citta, are worldly appellations, expressions, turns of speech and designations by which the Tathāgata expresses himself without being misled by them. (D i 202)

The Pudgalavādins themselves, though apparently never giving up the claim that the person is to be understood as something "true and ultimate", distinguished (as we have already seen) between statements about the aggregates and statements about the person. According to the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*,

> There are two kinds of doctrine taught by the Buddha. What are the two? The first concerns *dharmas* (法 *fǎ*), and the second concerns the sentient being (眾生 *zhòngshēng*, *sattva*). (T1649, 469a17)

These two kinds of doctrine are exactly what the other schools would identify as the Two Truths, the first ultimate, dealing with substances (*dravya*), and the second conventional, dealing with concepts (*prajñapti*). The Pudgalavādins presumably regard them as two different kinds of ultimate truth; but they do not say so in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*.

Where they do talk about the varieties of truth is in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, and there they do not speak of a single ultimate truth (whether in two modes or not), nor of the Two Truths common to the other schools, but of *three* truths.

What are the truths?

The truths are practical (等 *děng*, 俗數, *súshù*), characteristical (相 *xiàng*) and ultimate (第一義 *dìyíyì*). (*sūtra*)

Practical truth, characteristical truth and ultimate truth are the three kinds of truth. (T1506, 24c16; T1505, 10c8)

After this brief statement, Kumārabuddhi's version (the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*) moves on to another topic. But Saṅghadeva's version (the *Sānfǎdù lùn*) continues with an extended explanation, some of it unfortunately very obscure and possibly corrupt:

Truth is so called because it is the truth of what actually is (實有 *shíyǒu*), the truth of what is real (真 *zhēn*), the truth of what is not void (不虛 *bù xū*), the truth of what is so (如 *rú*).

Practical truth is usage (舉 *jǔ*, *vyavahāra*) which is local, ancestral or trained. (*sūtra*)

Local usage, ancestral usage and trained usage are called the three kinds of practical truth. One deals with various things and so it is spoken of as practical truth. To deal with various things is the object of wisdom. In this respect, local usage must have such an object. "This thing is something which I acknowledge as a certain thing with a certain name," such as a place soaked by water as a marsh. Such usages thus adopted are called practical truth. Ancestral usage is "the customs (*dharma*) of my own family". Trained usage is acting with dignity and formality and understanding the ideas of the sutras. Moreover, eating in the morning and not eating in the evening, not injuring plants, and not travelling in the rainy season—such behaviour is called practical truth.

What is characteristical truth?

Characteristical truth is Suffering, its Origin and the Path. (*sūtra*)

The Truth of Suffering, the Truth of its Origin, and the Truth of the Path are the three kinds of characteristical truth. Because it relates to the characteristics of the Truths, it is "characteristical". The characteristics of

the Truths are origination, decay and impermanence. "Characteristic" is explained as a mark (標幟 *biāozhì*, *dhvaja*). Here, the Truth of Suffering has the characteristic of oppressing (逼 *bī*); the Truth of its Origin has the characteristic of development (轉成 *zhuǎnchéng*); the Truth of the Path has the characteristic of producing what is necessary (出要 *chūyào*).[2] Cessation has no characteristic;[3] it is to be explained in a different way. Moreover, the Truth of Suffering is the aggregates, elements and spheres. The Truth of its Origin is lust, anger and dulness. The Truth of the Path is discipline, concentration and wisdom. These are called characteristical truth.

What is ultimate truth?

Ultimate truth is the final stopping of action, speech and thought. (*sūtra*)

The final stopping of action, speech and thought is called ultimate truth. Action is bodily activity; speech is verbal activity; thought is mental activity. If these three have finally ceased, that is called ultimate truth, which means Nirvana. (T1506, 24c16–25a5)

In spite of its obscurities, the general sense of this is clear enough. Practical (or conventional) truth is the body of opinions and customs which we acquire from our associates and families or learn from our teachers; as its name indicates, it is the system of truths by which we are able to function in the world, whether as laypersons or as monks. The other two truths are the means by which we go beyond the world; together they comprise the Four Noble Truths, with the Truths of Suffering, its Origin and the Path as characteristical truth, and the Truth of Cessation as ultimate truth. Characteristical truth consists of those features of the world which have to be seen as they are if we are to pass beyond Samsara to Nirvana. Ultimate truth is Nirvana itself, and has no characteristics.

2 Buddhaghosa (VM 22.99–102) identifies the characteristic of the Truth of Suffering as *pīḷana* (oppressing), that of the Truth of its Origin as *āyūhana* (producing) and that of the Truth of the Path as *niyyāna* (outlet). At another point (VM 16.23) he identifies them as *bādhana* (injury), *pabhava* (production) and *niyyāna*.

3 One might wonder whether the sense of the text here is not rather that cessation is characterized by non-existence. But according to Bhavya, the Vātsīputrīyas held that Nirvana is not to be understood simply as non-existence; it is neither existence nor non-existence (P5256, 68c6; P5640, 255c3), or else it is both existence and non-existence (P5256, 38a5f.; Iida, 1980: 196). See above, p. 70. Moreover, the phrasing here is not parallel to the statements which ascribe characteristics to the other three Truths. For Buddhaghosa, the Truth of Cessation has the characteristic of peace (*santi*; VM 16.23) or escape (*nissaraṇa*; VM 22.101).

Where does the *pudgala* belong in the system of three kinds of truth? According to our earliest sources, the Pudgalavādins claimed that the *pudgala* is "true and ultimate", and there is nothing to indicate that they abandoned or modified that claim in the centuries that followed; their eventual assertion (if our later sources are to be trusted) that the *pudgala* is substantial (*dravya*) must surely represent an attempt to maintain the truth and ultimacy of the self even at the cost of their earlier interpretation of it as conceptual. Without that claim, it is hard to see what would distinguish the Pudgalavādins from their opponents.

If the *pudgala* is "true and ultimate", then, it ought to form part of ultimate truth. But we have just seen that ultimate truth is identified with Nirvana. And Nirvana presumably cannot be identified with the *pudgala*, although according to Bhavya's *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna* it has the same indeterminate relationship with the phenomena of the world: "Nirvana is not said to be the same as all *dharmas* or different from them" (P5640, 255c3; P5256, 68c6). But if the *pudgala* is not included within ultimate truth, although in some sense "true and ultimate", can we assign it to characteristical truth, which comprises the characteristics of the first, second and fourth of the Noble Truths? The person is constituted by the aggregates, elements and spheres, perpetuates itself through lust, anger and dulness, and gains cessation through discipline, concentration and wisdom. We might suppose, then, that its truth is that of the three Noble Truths with which we can associate it, that is, characteristical truth. The truth of the *pudgala* would then be part of the real nature of things, whose recognition leads to Nirvana, and would thus be different from the merely practical or conventional truth by which we conduct ourselves in the world.

All of this seems plausible enough (if somewhat tenuous), but unfortunately there is an explicit statement in one of the two versions of the *Tridharma-khaṇḍaka* which appears to contradict this by assigning the *pudgala* to conventional truth. It occurs in the section on ignorance of the inexpressible (i.e. the *pudgala*), in which the three concepts of the *pudgala* are explained. Saṅghadeva's version (the *Sānfǎdù lùn*) deals very briefly with these concepts, but Kumārabuddhi's (the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*) explains them in some detail. At the end of its account of the concept according to transition, it says, "This concept according to transition is expressed through worldly meaning" (T1505, 10a19). A little earlier in the same passage, there is a very obscure reference to "popular convention". Thích Thiện Châu (1977: 118, 213) takes these to be references to conventional truth, as they certainly seem to be. It looks as if the *pudgala* is to be understood as only conventionally true.

If that is in fact what this passage affirms, and if this passage (which has no counterpart in Saṅghadeva's version) really belongs to the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* or at least gives an accurate account of its meaning, then we are at a loss to say how the Pudgalavādins' position differs from that of their opponents. But that may not be what the passage is saying. We should note that it is only in connection with the concept according to transition that it speaks of "popular convention" and "worldly meaning". If the intention was to say that all three of the concepts of the *pudgala* were only conventionally true, the statement ought to have come at the end of the whole section on the concepts, not within the explanation of one of them. As it is, the assertion that the concept according to transition is "expressed through worldly meaning" without any comparable assertion for the other two concepts suggests that they (or their expression) are not merely conventional.

It is in fact the expression of the concept according to transition that is said to be "through worldly meaning". A concept (*prajñapti*) is generally understood to be a nominal entity, since it is through language that various phenomena can be grouped together as a single system; the term '*prajñapti*' is often translated as "designation". One might expect the conventional expression of a concept to be accordingly simply the concept itself, that is, a particular linguistic grouping of associated phenomena. But here it seems unlikely that the concept of the *pudgala* (that is, the *pudgala* as a conceptual entity) is conventional in the one case but not in the others, and so we have to ask how the *expression* of the concept according to transition differs from the expression of the other two concepts.

What is distinctive about the concept according to transition is that it involves the "three times", past, present and future; it is the concept defined according to the continuity of the *pudgala* from one life to the next, from the past to the present, or from the present to the future. But the Pudgalavādins (agreeing with most of the Early Schools against the Sarvāstivādins) deny that past or future *dharmas* actually exist. It is noteworthy that when the Vātsīputrīya in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* defines the *pudgala*, he is careful to say that "the person is conceived by appropriating the *present* aggregates appropriated as internal" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.7f.). The concept according to the basis relates simply to the five aggregates which constitute the *pudgala* at the time of its existence; but the concept according to transition, the person as a being which continues from one life to the next, can only be defined in terms of aggregates which do not yet exist or no longer exist: perhaps in this sense the concept according to transition is necessarily "conventional", since it involves reference to entities which do not actually exist.

This seems reasonable as far as it goes. But what about the concept according to cessation? Surely it too is defined according to what no longer exists, the aggregates of the Buddha or Arhat who has attained Parinirvana. Why is it not also said to be "expressed through worldly meaning"? Perhaps because the *nirodha* by which it is defined is not thought of simply as an event, the cessation of the five aggregates, but as an enduring reality, which is in fact Nirvana. (We have already seen that the complete cessation of action, speech and thought is Nirvana.) If the concept according to cessation is the person defined in relation to Nirvana, then what enters into its definition is not a mere non-entity, but ultimate truth. The expression of such a concept might be felt to belong to a higher order than "popular convention" or "worldly meaning".

But in what sense can the concept of the person, that is, the person as a conceptual entity, exist at all after the person has attained Parinirvana? Are we not obliged to say that such a person has no basis in any existing aggregates, but is conceived only on the basis of aggregates which no longer exist? (It is hard to see how the impersonal reality of Nirvana could be a basis for the concept of a person.) And how is that different from saying that the person no longer exists, but we can think and talk about the present non-existence of the person on the basis of that person's former existence? The concept of such a person who is no longer existent might be a designation or an activity of thought, but surely not anything like a "conceptual entity" of the sort we have been discussing. And that the person is not existent in Parinirvana seems to be confirmed by our texts. The *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* (in both versions) says, "The concept according to cessation precludes eternalism" (T1505, 10a28; T1506, 24b6), and the *Sāṃmitīya-nikāyaśāstra*, "Since one can attain Nirvana without residue [i.e. Parinirvana], this being what was taught by the Buddha, we do not say that the person is eternal" (T1649, 466a7). If there is no person, conceptual or otherwise, in Parinirvana, surely what we think and say about the person who has attained Parinirvana is no more than the practical convention by which we recognize the non-existence of that person, even if Nirvana itself is something real and eternal. It would seem that the concept according to cessation is really no person at all, and so its expression ought to be relegated to conventional truth.

We have assumed here that if the aggregates upon whose basis the person is conceived no longer exist in Parinirvana, the person likewise no longer exists; and the Pudgalavādins' denial that the person is eternal seems to confirm this assumption. But in the *Kathāvatthu* we find that the Pudgalavādin is willing, at least initially, to say that the person who has attained Parinirvana exists "in the

Goal"[4] (*atthamhi*), that is, in Nirvana, while denying that the person is eternal. When it is suggested that the alleged person no longer exists in Parinirvana and is thus annihilated, the Pudgalavādin denies that also (KV 1.1.228).[5] Once again the *pudgala* turns out to be indeterminate.

That the Pudgalavādin denies that the person is annihilated in Parinirvana should not surprise us. We have already seen that the Buddha would not say that a Tathāgata is annihilated in death and denied that his teaching was of "the cutting off, the destruction, the annihilation of an existing being" (M i 140). The Pudgalavādins no doubt felt that in this regard they were following the Buddha's teaching precisely. And the relationship between the *pudgala*, Nirvana, and the phenomena of the five aggregates makes it clear (if that is the right word) that the nature of Parinirvana could not be explained satisfactorily in terms of either the existence or the non-existence of the person. As we know from many of our sources, the *pudgala* is neither the same as the *dharmas* of the five aggregates nor different from them. According to Bhavya, the Vātsīputrīyas held that "Nirvana cannot be said to be the same as all *dharmas* or different from them" (P5256, 68c6; P5640, 255c3). It would seem, then, that as the *pudgala* and Nirvana are both non-different from the same *dharmas* (those of the five aggregates being included in "all *dharmas*"), the *pudgala* and Nirvana ought to be non-different from each other; and in fact the Pudgalavādin in the *Kathāvatthu* is represented as denying that the aggregates, Nirvana and the *pudgala* are three separate things (KV 1.1.226).[6] If the *pudgala* and Nirvana are not really different from each other, then as long as Nirvana exists, the *pudgala* cannot be said to be non-existent.

This puts the concept according to cessation in a different light. The person who has attained Parinirvana is conceived primarily, we may say, on the basis of cessation, that is, Nirvana, from which the person is not really different, and secondarily on the basis of the particular system of aggregates which has ceased, through which the person in Parinirvana can still be identified retrospectively. To the extent that the person is not the same as Nirvana, its expression in terms of the aggregates which have ceased might be held to be only a practical expedient according to "worldly meaning"; but to the extent to which it is not different from Nirvana, it must share in the reality of Nirvana, which is ultimate truth.

We can perhaps conclude, then, that the person as concept according to the basis and concept according to transition is to be assigned to characteristical truth (comprising the Truths of Suffering, its Origin and the Path), but that the person

4 This is how Aung and Rhys Davids translate "*attha*" (PC 56).

5 Nālandā ed. 1.1.216; p. 63.

6 Nālandā ed. 1.1.211; p. 62.

as concept according to cessation partakes of ultimate truth (the Truth of Cessation). The person is thus part of the content of all four of the Noble Truths.

What about practical or conventional truth? Does the person have no place in that? As we have seen, the text which explains practical truth is not very clear, but it seems to indicate that it consists of modes of behaviour rather than actual entities; it includes ways of dealing with groups of loosely associated phenomena (local usage), the traditional practices of a family or clan (ancestral usage), and the rules of behaviour set down for the monastic community (trained usage). Both the phenomena and the persons which are conceived on their basis are obviously involved in these "usages"; all of one's actions, after all, consist of various interrelated phenomena and are connected with various persons, including oneself. But neither phenomena nor persons are the *immediate* content of practical truth.

This brings us to the question of the two kinds of doctrine which we have already noted in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, the one dealing with phenomena and the other with the sentient being (i.e. the person). How are these to be related to the three truths (practical, characteristical and ultimate)? Phenomena (*dharmas*) are assigned to the characteristical and ultimate truths according as they are created (*saṃskṛta*) or uncreated (*asaṃskṛta*). The person likewise is assigned to the characteristical and ultimate truths according as it is conceived on the basis of the created or the uncreated. The created *dharmas*, which constitute characteristical truth, are included in the Noble Truths of Suffering, its Origin and the Path; the uncreated *dharma*, which is the ultimate truth, is the content of the Noble Truth of Cessation. The person, conceived on the basis either of the created or of the uncreated, belongs to all four of the Noble Truths. The two kinds of doctrine are to be found, then, in both characteristical and ultimate truth and consequently throughout the Four Noble Truths.

That both kinds of doctrine should be co-extensive with the Four Noble Truths is hardly surprising. In the first place, the various concepts of the person are based on the created or uncreated *dharmas* which are the content of the Truths. Although the person is not identical with these *dharmas*, it is not different from them either, and so because the Truths deal with the created and uncreated *dharmas*, they must also in some sense deal with the *pudgala*.

In the second place, the sole purpose of the Buddha's teaching is the elimination of suffering; he had no interest in studying phenomena for their own sake. But suffering is something that occurs only for sentient beings, and is surely of concern only to sentient beings. When the Buddha talks about suffering, he is speaking about our suffering; when he talks about various

phenomena, he is speaking of phenomena which have an important bearing on our own existence. When he shows us that there are no phenomena which we can identify as ourselves, he does so for our sakes. When he points to the reality of Nirvana, it is so that we may attain it. The whole of the Buddha's teaching is in fact about sentient beings and for the sake of sentient beings. The Buddha's teaching is about persons.

Chapter 7

The *Pudgala* as Conceptual

NO ONE has ever denied that the Buddha's teaching was in some sense about persons; the question is, in what sense? According to our earlier sources (including the *Sāmmitīyanikāyaśāstra*), the Pudgalavādins affirmed the person as *prajñapti*, as a conceptual entity. Leaving aside the question of whether this position was later modified (as it appears to have been), let us consider more carefully how such a position differs from that held by the other schools. For as we have seen, non-Pudgalavādins such as Harivarman and Vasubandhu also said that the person is conceptual.

We are tempted to say that for the Pudgalavādins this conceptual person exists, whereas for the other schools it is merely conceptual and so non-existent. But what the non-Pudgalavādins deny is that the person exists *dravyatas*, as something real or substantial; like the Pudgalavādins, they affirm its existence *prajñaptitas*, as something conceptual. The *Mahāvibhāṣā* actually includes "the *pudgala* conceived according to the combination of the aggregates" as its example of "composite existence" in a list of five kinds of existence (T1545, 42b2). So the existence of the *pudgala* is not in dispute, and apparently neither is the manner of its existence: all agree that it exists conceptually.

Where then is the disagreement? We have seen that the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Vijñānakāya* represent the Pudgalavādin as claiming that the *pudgala* is apprehended "as something true and ultimate", and some such claim is surely to be understood in all the discussions that we find in later works such as the *Tattvasiddhi* and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. Our examination of the doctrine of three truths in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* has suggested that the *pudgala* should be assigned to the ultimate truth and the characteristical truth; it is not merely part of the "usages" or modes of behaviour which constitute practical truth. For the Pudgalavādins the person has evidently the same status in the teaching of the Buddha as the interconnected phenomena upon which it is based.

What is at issue then is the status of the *pudgala* as a conceptual entity. When the Buddha wanted to talk about the law of karma, he talked about what persons do and what they suffer, how persons are treated and what the consequences of treating them well or badly will be. Persons, it seems, have real relationships with the world around them, are responsible for real actions and encounter the results of those actions. The non-Pudgalavādins hold that whatever the Buddha

said about persons could also have been said, more accurately though less economically, about the phenomena constituting those persons; talking about the *pudgala* is simply a convenient way of talking about *dharmas*. The Pudgalavādins on the contrary maintain that the person is not reducible to its constituents.

This looks like a problem familiar to us in the West. The *pudgala* is a conceptual entity in the sense that it is a system of distinct though interrelated entities grasped as a whole through the use of the term '*pudgala*'. Is the whole simply the sum of the elements that constitute it, or is the whole in some sense greater than the sum of its parts? The problem is of course by no means clear: what is the nature of the sum with which the whole is to be compared? Is it all the parts before they have entered into the various relationships by which they form the whole, like a heap of components not yet assembled into a machine? Or is it the parts *in* their relationships with one another, like the parts of a machine that is already assembled and running? If the former, the whole is certainly greater than the sum of its parts, but obviously and trivially so; the machine assembled is something more than the machine in pieces. If the latter, we seem to be asking whether the whole is greater than itself; for surely the whole is all the parts in all their relationships with one another. But if the whole is simply the sum of its parts (in this second sense), then surely whatever we say about the whole can be translated into statements about the parts and their relationships. Or is there in fact some way in which statements about the parts and their relationships are not equivalent to the corresponding statements about the whole?

Clearly such statements are equivalent in the sense that we *can* explain what the whole is by describing its parts and their relationships; in the same sense any description which defines a thing is equivalent to the term for that thing. But they are not equivalent in the sense that both kinds of statement will serve equally well in all circumstances; we talk about persons in order to avoid the absurd task of trying to give a detailed account of the phenomena of the five aggregates which constitute those persons, and we talk about the five aggregates in order to clarify what it is that we are talking about when we talk about persons. The two kinds of statement serve different purposes and in *that* sense are not interchangeable.

There is a further sense in which they are not equivalent. Statements about the person and statements about the phenomena of the five aggregates both refer to the same state of affairs (to put it as vaguely as possible); but they do not identify the same entities *in* that state of affairs. Statements about the person are after all statements about a single entity, the *pudgala*. Statements about the five

aggregates are statements about the interconnected phenomena which constitute it, the *dharmas*. *Pudgalas* and *dharmas* are different kinds of entity, and to that extent the statements about them are not equivalent.

If these statements call our attention to different kinds of entity, the understanding which they afford will also be different in each case. To understand that there is a person is not after all to understand that it consists of a system of interconnected phenomena, and to understand that the phenomena of the five aggregates occur and are interrelated is not necessarily to recognize that they constitute a person. The person consists of phenomena which are not the person, and if that were not the case, learning about the constituents of the person would add nothing to our knowledge of the person. As it is, we already know what we are talking about when we speak of the person, but learning about the five aggregates makes us aware also of what the person consists of. Conversely, being reminded of the person can renew our awareness of what it is that the five aggregates constitute.

But if statements about the person do not convey the same understanding as statements about the five aggregates, and if the former convey something which the latter fail to convey, then statements about the person are *not* simply a convenient way of saying what is said more accurately by statements about the aggregates. The two kinds of statement are not simply shorter and more elaborate forms respectively of what are really the same statements; they are distinct kinds of statement whose meanings are complementary just as the different entities they deal with (the person and its constituent phenomena) are interrelated. Each kind of statement may serve to illuminate the other, but neither is actually reducible to the other.

What this seems to mean, then, is that there is a sense in which the whole is not reducible to its parts. We can be aware of the whole without having explicit awareness of its parts, and awareness of the parts does not guarantee awareness of the whole. Whole and parts are distinguishable though not absolutely distinct objects of awareness. As entities they are neither identical nor separate.

Both the Pudgalavādins and their opponents agree that the whole is a conceptual entity; it is not something that can be discovered as a further substantial entity among its parts, but is rather the parts themselves taken together as a whole. Both agree that the relationship of the whole to its parts is indeterminate: the whole is neither the same as its parts nor different from them. Both agree that the whole as a conceptual entity exists. Their disagreement seems to be about whether the rather limited sense in which the whole is not reducible

to its parts entitles us to regard it as "true and ultimate" along with the irreducible phenomena which are its ultimate constituents.

This may not strike us as the kind of issue that would divide a community. How can it matter whether we say that the conceptual self is "true and ultimate" or not, as long as we understand that it is conceptual? The Pudgalavādins insist on the functional reality of the self, and their opponents insist on the sole reality of its constituents. But the Pudgalavādins as represented by our earlier sources never claim that the self is other than conceptual, and their opponents acknowledge that the activity of a particular system of the five aggregates can, for practical purposes, be spoken of as the activity of a person. They agree in rejecting the kind of permanent self, essentially independent of the empirical personality, which was taught by some of the non-Buddhist traditions, and they agree in recognizing the continuity of a personal identity founded upon the sequential occurrence of the phenomena of the five aggregates. Their agreement seems to be all but complete, and we might suppose that the conflict between them involved nothing more significant than their particular preferences in phrasing. But the vigour of the dispute throughout the period represented by our sources suggests that there may have been more involved here, at least in the opinion of the disputants, than a simple matter of taste.

Ostensibly, the opponents of the Pudgalavāda object to the doctrine of the reality of the self on the grounds that belief in the reality of the self is the basis for craving and the suffering that derives from it. The Pudgalavādins' contention seems to be that the basis for craving is rather the belief that the self is either the same as the five aggregates or different from them; the real self properly understood affords no basis for craving, presumably because it cannot be grasped as any kind of determinate entity. Since their opponents recognize what appears to be the same indeterminate self, but deny its reality, regarding it as merely a particular form in which the five aggregates can be grasped conceptually, it seems that the issue is not whether there is such a thing as a self (both acknowledging that in some sense there is), nor what its nature is (both agreeing that it is indeterminate), but whether its nature entitles it to be described as "true and ultimate".

But how significant is this issue? For the opponents of the Pudgalavāda, the self as it really is, a conceptual entity whose relation to its constituents is indeterminate, affords no basis for craving because of its indeterminacy, its insubstantiality. But for the Pudgalavādins, the true self, an entity (conceptual or not) whose relation to its constituents is indeterminate, likewise affords no basis for craving, apparently because of its indeterminacy. If, in the view of both, the

self properly understood affords no basis for craving, and if both agree in understanding the nature of the self to be indeterminate, what does it matter whether they declare the self to be "true and ultimate" or not? They both apparently see the nature of the self as it is, and both see that it affords no basis for craving.

What is at stake? The opponents of the Pudgalavāda understand the real to be determinate. If the self is described as real, it is affirmed as a determinate entity, which must be either some or all of the aggregates themselves, or else some other entity altogether. If it is supposed to be the former, it disintegrates into the momentary occurrences of its constituent phenomena; if it is the latter, it is the kind of independent self taught by the non-Buddhists. In either case, the coherent development of the person taught by the Buddha seems impossible. But the Pudgalavādins acknowledge that the self is indeterminate; why then do they insist on describing the self as "true and ultimate" and eventually, according to our later sources, as substantial?

The Pudgalavādins in their turn might ask why their opponents will not admit anything indeterminate as real or substantial. That is a question less easily answered. It is possible, of course, that it seemed so obvious to them that the substantial is only the determinate that the suggestion that the term might be extended to include something indeterminate seemed frivolous; their conviction would be that the Pudgalavādins were simply misusing the language. But one suspects that there was more to it than that. The Pudgalavādins seem to have been driven to describe the self as substantial (*dravya*) by their opponents' insistence that only the substantial is "true and ultimate"; since the Pudgalavādins accepted more as "true and ultimate" than their opponents, they could agree to the identification of the "true and ultimate" with the substantial only by expanding the notion of the "substantial" beyond its normal limits, or at any rate beyond the limits that their opponents would accept. Clearly the identity of the "true and ultimate" with the "substantial" was not initially obvious to everyone, and when the opponents of the Pudgalavāda decided that the "true and ultimate" could only be the determinate, they were not simply following a generally accepted usage. They were rather insisting on determinacy as a universal feature of the world we talk about, while acknowledging indeterminacy as characteristic of some (but not all) of our ways of talking about it.

What happens if we ascribe indeterminacy to the world itself? The world will seem to be not fully comprehensible, inasmuch as some parts of it, those that are indeterminate, cannot be either described or understood with precision, since they are themselves nothing precise. But the Buddha is supposed to have had

precise knowledge of the world, and the precision of his knowledge is assumed to be our guarantee of the efficacy of his teaching. Now if there is something which is supposed to be real and yet cannot be known with precision, the Buddha's teaching concerning it can only be approximate, only an indication of its nature, since it is not reducible to the determinate entities to which it is related. The authority and finality of the Buddha's teaching may accordingly seem to be compromised.

A world in which everything is determinate seems, on the contrary, to be one in which everything is comprehensible, at least in principle. Everything is precisely what it is, and is not what it is not. The relation of everything to everything else is likewise determinate and comprehensible, and the function of everything is likewise determined precisely to the finest detail of its actuality. Such a world can be known exactly and comprehensively, and can (within practical limits) be exhaustively described. The vast exegetical structures of the Theravādin and Sarvāstivādin Abhidharmas can be understood to be founded upon the assumption that everything in the world that actually exists is determinate.

What was at stake, then, for the opponents of the Pudgalavāda may have been the comprehensibility and, in fact, the rationality of the world. The Pudgalavādins seemed to their opponents to have made a wholly irrational entity the centre of their interpretation of the Buddha's teaching; they seemed to have adopted what was meant to be a demonstration of the fundamental absurdity of the notion of a real self, and to have offered it as their proof that the nature of the real self is mysterious and ineffable. They seemed in this way to have sacrificed reason for the sake of their attachment to what the Buddha was above all concerned to deny, and to have opened the door to as many other such irrational entities as it might please anyone to introduce. It is not surprising that their opponents felt that they had obscured the clarity and compromised the authority of the Buddha's teaching.

To the Pudgalavādins themselves the whole matter must have appeared otherwise. We can guess from their patient insistence on the actual words of the Buddha, whatever their apparent inconsistencies, that they believed that they were simply presenting what the Buddha himself had taught, without presuming to alter the relative weight of his various utterances by any expedient of interpretation. The Buddha taught that the five aggregates are not to be identified with the self, and that the self is not to be found apart from them; he taught that the same person passes from life to life, and that the person is the bearer of the

burden of the five aggregates. It seemed clear to them that the self must be "true and ultimate", but paradoxical in nature.

What would have been their objection to their opponents' understanding of the self as simply the five aggregates comprehended conceptually under a single term? They tell us, of course, that to understand the self in this way is really to identify it with the five aggregates, while everyone agrees that the Buddha taught that the five aggregates are not the self. Their opponents naturally insist that the self *as a thing* is not the five aggregates or anything else; there is no real self at all: what the term 'self' denotes in ordinary discourse is not any distinct entity but simply the five aggregates in the form in which they are grasped under that term. A person *is* his body, feelings, perceptions, mental forces and consciousness, but only in the sense that these form a complex, changing system which can be conveniently referred to in its totality as "this person". The system as a whole is really no single entity, but merely the dynamic combination of its constituents.

The Pudgalavādins remain unsatisfied. If the person is the bearer of the burden of the five aggregates, one can hardly say that the person is simply the five aggregates comprehended conceptually under a single term: what sense could it make to say that the five aggregates taken as a person are the bearer of the same five aggregates taken as themselves? The same aggregates, however we take them, cannot be both bearer and burden. Vasubandhu (after noting that the absurdity is in any case no worse than those the Pudgalavādins accept)[1] argues that the bearer and the burden are not after all the same aggregates, but earlier and later aggregates in the same series:

> Those very aggregates which are earlier conduce to the harm of those aggregates which are later, and so they are called the burden and the bearer of the burden; for 'burden' has the meaning of harm. (AKB 9; DS ed. 1206.9–1207.1)

In other words, we bear the consequences of our past deeds, and in that sense we are now burdened with what we have been; we ourselves (so to speak) are both the burden and the bearer of the burden.

Vasubandhu's argument is plausible, at least up to a point; this may have been what the Buddha meant, and of course according to Vasubandhu's understanding the Buddha cannot have meant anything else; but we may be left with the feeling that the Buddha's choice of images was in this case a little

[1] *Avaktavyo 'pi na yuktaḥ*, the inexpressible is likewise absurd (AKB 9; DS ed. 1206.5).

unfortunate. The sutra says quite clearly that the burden is the five aggregates and the bearer[2] of the burden is the *pudgala*; it also says that the taking up of the burden is the desire for further existence accompanied by pleasure and the laying down of the burden is the abandoning of that desire. Since the burden is identified as the five aggregates and the bearer is not, it is natural to assume that the two are different in nature and not merely in the time of their occurrence, and if the taking up of the burden is the desire for further existence, it would seem that the five aggregates are something co-existent with the *pudgala* which it assumes in order to continue its existence. If the Buddha wanted to convey the meaning that Vasubandhu ascribes to him, he found a strangely misleading way of doing so. The fact is that the passage is difficult on any interpretation, and it is by no means certain that Vasubandhu's is the most obvious or, for that matter, the most satisfactory.

But even if we can understand how it was possible and perhaps reasonable for the Pudgalavādins to have interpreted this passage as they did, we have not explained why it seemed necessary to them. Why did they object so strongly to the way in which their opponents identified what is real in the self with the five aggregates? Once again we have to ask what is really at stake.

Part of the explanation may lie in the Pudgalavādins' unwillingness to relegate any of the Buddha's utterances to the level of metaphor. Their opponents recognize two kinds of truth, ultimate and conventional, the first to be taken literally, as an exact representation of reality, and the second figuratively, as a convenient and popular indication of reality through expressions which taken literally are false. Like metaphor, conventional truth is a way of showing the nature of a thing by calling it something which it is not; but whereas metaphor represents a departure from the regular conventions of language, conventional truth is an accommodation of the extraordinary insights of the Buddha to the conventions of ordinary speech. But as we have seen, the Pudgalavādins distinguished three kinds of truth, only the third of which corresponds to "conventional truth" and could thus be considered popular or figurative. Whatever utterances of the Buddha are comprised within the Four Noble Truths will be either ultimate or characteristical truth, and so are true literally, without any accommodation to popular assumptions. As the Vātsīputrīya in the *Tattvasiddhi* says,

> If the Āryas spoke of [the self] as existing when as a mere name it is non-existent, then they would speak falsely; but the Āryas are so called

[2] See above, p. 29, n. 5.

> because they speak according to reality, and so we know that the self exists. And if the Āryas see that in reality the self does not exist and yet following common opinion speak of the self as existing, then [what they declare as] their own view should be erroneous, since they speak otherwise [than according to the truth]. And if following common opinion they speak of it as existing when it does not, then they should not also explain the doctrines of the twelve conditions, the three ways of emancipation, non-self and so on according to their real meaning in the sutras. If some person says that the other world exists, they should agree that it exists; if a person says that it does not exist, they should agree with that person that it does not exist. They ought to agree with all of the [non-Buddhist] scriptures containing every kind of false view, such as that everything in the world is produced by a supreme god. But this is not admissible. (T1646, 260a1–9)

So if the Buddha said that the person is the bearer of the burden, this could only be because the person exists as something true and ultimate, and not merely because people are in the habit of referring to the five aggregates as a person. Otherwise we should have to suppose that the Buddha thought it possible to convey the truth by saying things that were inexact and misleading.

It must have seemed to them in fact that what the Buddha said about the person was simply true, and not merely true in some peculiar, qualified way. When the Buddha declared that he had been such and such a person in a past existence, he spoke the truth: he had been that person. The fact that the Buddha now and the person he had been were linked by the causal relationships among successive sets of the five aggregates did not alter the reality of their historic identity, and that identity was most appropriately, most truthfully, expressed as he expressed it. To have said that the five aggregates which constituted his present personality were the consequence of acts proceeding from other aggregates in the past would not have been to say the same thing; the Buddha was affirming personal identity, not the causal sequence upon which the identity was based. When he said that he had been that person in the past, he was stating a literal truth about himself, a truth which like any truth could be misunderstood by the unenlightened, but which was no less a truth for that. If he had wanted to talk about the five aggregates, he would have done so.

Now if what the Buddha said about the person was simply and literally true, to treat such statements as merely figurative would certainly be inappropriate; but we may still wonder how an error of this kind, even if perhaps offensive,

could be a source of any serious harm. Were the Pudgalavādins merely insisting on the veracity of their master, or did they see some real danger arising from such a misunderstanding of his teaching?

We have already seen that the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the Vātsīputrīya in the *Tattvasiddhi* argue that if the self were not really existent, "there could not be any killing of a living being or one who kills or anyone that is killed" (T1649, 465a16), and "just as killing a clay ox does not entail the guilt of killing, so if one kills a real ox there should also be no guilt" (T1646, 259c27). Their concern is evidently that denial of the self will destroy part of the foundation for the Buddhist belief in karma and moral responsibility. One of the arguments attributed to the Pudgalavādin in the *Vijñānakāya* may shed further light on the nature of this concern. The Pudgalavādin asks about the object of benevolence (*maitrī*): toward what do we direct our good will? The Sarvāstivādin replies that the object of benevolence is the series of constituent aggregates which we describe figuratively as a sentient being (*sattva*). The Pudgalavādin then asks whether the Buddha spoke well in saying that a monk entering the meditation of benevolence thinks, "May all sentient beings be happy." The Sarvāstivādin agrees, and the Pudgalavādin then argues that he has contradicted his previous statement that the object of benevolence is the aggregates (T1539, 543c8–20).[3] Now on the face of it, this is merely another argument based on the Pudgalavādins' assumption that whatever was well said by the Buddha must be taken literally; but while we may feel quite complacent about interpreting the rebirth of a person as the appearance of a new set of the five aggregates, we may feel some unease if it is suggested that when we are well disposed toward a person, our good will is directed not to the person, strictly speaking, but to a series of constituent aggregates. We feel that we care for people, not for assemblages of phenomena.

The denial of the reality of the person, then, seems to the Pudgalavādin to be a denial of the humanity of the human being, since it amounts to saying that a human being is more properly to be seen as a body (itself a composite) with which are associated feelings, perceptions, volition and other mental forces, and consciousness, than as a person. The opponents of the Pudgalavāda view the person impersonally; in the belief that they are stripping away illusion, they dehumanize their perceptions of other persons even while they undertake to cultivate boundless benevolence, compassion and sympathetic joy. But what kind of good will can one feel toward an impersonal system of transitory phenomena?

[3] La Vallée Poussin, 1923: 366f.

The opponents of the Pudgalavāda would no doubt protest that the suffering of other beings is real even if the beings who are supposed to experience the suffering are not; the suffering persists within the aggregates which support the illusion of a person, and our wish is that those aggregates should be free of suffering. And they might go on to point out that it is the illusion of a person that is the basis for that selfishness which we seek to overcome through the practice of benevolence. If we insist on the reality of the person as the object of benevolence, we reinforce the very illusion which the exercise of benevolence was meant to dispel.

The fact remains, however, that if there is no person, the suffering in another series of aggregates does not belong to anyone, but is simply an event occurring in what amounts to another world: there is suffering there, but no one who suffers. We are reminded a little of the doctrine ascribed to Pakudha Kaccāyana in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*:

> These seven bodies, Great King, are not made nor formed of what is made, not created nor caused to be created, barren, immovable as a peak, firm as a standing pillar. They neither move nor change; they do not harm each other; they do not in the least cause each other pleasure, or suffering, or pleasure and suffering. What are the seven? The body of earth, the body of water, the body of fire, the body of air, pleasure, suffering and the living being (*jīva*) as the seventh.... And so there is no one who slays or causes to slay, who hears or causes to hear, who knows or causes to know. If one cuts off a head with a sharp sword, no one deprives anyone of life; the sword merely falls into the space for it between the seven bodies. (D i 56)

Pakudha's doctrine of the permanence of the elementary bodies has of course no counterpart in Buddhist teaching (apart from a faint echo in the Sarvāstivāda); it belongs to an entirely different way of thinking. But the suggestion that suffering is an element existing in some sense objectively, without any real relation to a self, seems similar to the orthodox Buddhist denial that there is a person to whom the suffering belongs. For Pakudha, of course, there is a *jīva*, but since it is separate from the other six elementary bodies, he can go on to say that "there is no one who slays or causes to slay, who hears or causes to hear, who knows or causes to know;" the *jīva* is real but essentially irrelevant to all human action. For the opponents of the Pudgalavāda, the self (whether we call it *jīva* or *pudgala*) is ultimately non-existent. For both, what we are accustomed to regard

as a person is to be viewed impersonally, as a collection of distinct constituents which may include or be characterized as suffering.

One imagines that Pakudha's doctrine, like the Sāṃkhya, was meant to show the absurdity of assuming an attachment to things which are fundamentally separate from the self. The orthodox Buddhist teaching similarly tries to show that attachment is absurd when there is no self to whom anything could belong. Both would show that in a sense, at least, no one can suffer harm: Pakudha, by denying that the *jīva* can be destroyed or that it has any real connection with anything else through which harm could come to it; the Buddhists, by denying that there is any self to be harmed. But both seem to have shown, by the same token, that no one else can suffer harm; as we ourselves are invulnerable, whether by isolation or by non-existence, so also are those others toward whom we might feel benevolence, compassion and sympathetic joy. And if they are invulnerable, what is the significance of our benevolence and compassion? To the extent that we are freed from our concern with self, we seem also unavoidably to be freed from any concern for other selves. On such a basis we seem to have no choice but to regard other beings with an equanimity that amounts to indifference.

In this we can recognize a familiar caricature of the goal of Buddhism: a lofty disregard for all things, including the suffering (unpleasant to contemplate) of those who have not yet attained to such indifference. Such a goal might well be thought unworthy of a human being; if it had really been the Buddha's, his teaching of a way leading to it would have been a doubtful blessing, and his compassion in doing so, incomprehensible. But in fact the Buddha himself, as portrayed in the early sutras, was remarkable for his kindness and concern for the well-being of others, and this kindness and concern, this humanity of the Buddha, has been traditionally recognized by his followers, whether Pudgalavādin or not, as really inseparable from his enlightenment and freedom. The Buddha, having put an end to the process of suffering in himself and fully aware of the suffering still experienced by others, was (they feel) naturally and necessarily kind and compassionate.[4] The caricature accordingly is a caricature,

4 In the *Ariyapariyesanasutta*, the Buddha is represented as recalling his decision to teach the Dhamma: "Then, monks, aware of Brahmā's request, out of compassion (*kāruññataṃ paṭicca*) I looked upon the world with the eye of a Buddha" (M i 169). For almost all the schools, that the Buddha was compassionate was beyond dispute, although the *Kathāvatthu* (18.3) records the opinion, ascribed by the commentary to the Uttarāpathakas, that the Buddha had no compassion because he was free of passion (*rāga*). But some other schools than the Pudgalavādins evidently had difficulty in reconciling the Buddha's compassion with the doctrine of the unreality of selves. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB 7.33a; DS ed. 1094.1 f.) says that the great compassion of a Buddha is of the nature of conventional knowledge (*saṃvṛtijñāna*), and explains at another point (AKB 7.2ab; DS ed. 1035.8), "Impure (*sāsrava*) [knowledge] is conventional knowledge because for the most part it conventionally apprehends pots, cloth, women, men and so on." And as

and any interpretation which leads to it may be appropriately rejected as unsound. The Pudgalavādins were of course convinced that their opponents' doctrines (which we have come to regard as orthodox) amounted to such an interpretation.

What seems to be at stake, then, is the humanity of the Buddha and of human beings in general as a basis for the moral qualities universally acknowledged to be an essential part of the practice of Buddhism. As far as the Pudgalavādins are concerned, the denial of the reality of the self is inconsistent with the Buddha's compassion and so also with his wisdom (since the one proceeds inevitably from the other) and whatever wisdom the denial of the self's reality represents, it is clearly not the Buddha's, but something more akin to the antinomian doctrines of the Ājīvikas. The Pudgalavādins must have regarded themselves as the upholders of the true teaching of the Buddha, a middle way between the position of the Jains, Ājīvikas and Sāṃkhyas on the one hand, who held the self to be something separate from the five aggregates, and that of their Buddhist opponents and the materialists on the other, who seemed to the Pudgalavādins to identify the five aggregates with the self. Like the Buddha, they steered a course between existence and non-existence, denying that the self either existed apart from its constituents or shared in their continual annihilation. They maintained the reality of a self whose nature could be indicated (but not defined) by the elusive doctrine of dependent origination, which the Buddha himself had identified as the essence of his teaching. They felt that they could claim accordingly to be the true inheritors of the Buddha's compassionate and liberating insight.

Guenther notes (1957: 307), the *Atthasālinī* excludes compassion and sympathetic joy (*muditā*) from the list of supramundane *dhammas* on the grounds that these have the sentient being (*sattva*) as their object (AS 217).

Chapter 8

Misgivings

UP TO this point we have considered the *pudgala* as a conceptual entity, understanding that to mean a group or system of phenomena comprehended as a whole under a single term. We have seen that such a whole is *as an entity* not reducible to its constituents, in the sense that the parts and their relationships taken together are not the same as the parts and relationships taken separately: we *see* the system differently when we see it as a whole. But the whole is not a further entity existing outside of its parts, as if it were yet another part to be numbered with the rest. The relationship of the whole to its parts is thus indeterminate: they are not identical, but neither are they distinct; they are the same reality grasped differently in thought and language.

Since seeing the whole is not the same as seeing its parts, a view of the reality which is confined to the one kind of perception or the other will be defective; both are necessary if the reality is to be seen as it is. But the non-Pudgalavādins, determined to avoid the errors that result from seeing only the person as a whole, go to the other extreme in following the Buddha's analysis of the person and try to restrict their view to the constituent phenomena and their relationships, relegating the person to the level of convention and metaphor. The Pudgalavādins' belief is that their opponents have in this way reduced the world to a system of impersonal components in which there is no basis for the human qualities which the Buddha himself emphasized and embodied.

This interpretation is attractive in a number of ways. It represents the Pudgalavādins as generally recognizing the same facts as their opponents; they were not blindly or wilfully ignoring the evidence on which the orthodox position was based. It shows that the nature of the disagreement between the two sides is by no means as obvious as it initially seemed, and in fact involves a point of some subtlety. And it offers an explanation of the kind of concern which was evidently felt by each side, and hints at a fundamental difference in outlook which may have been at the root of their concern. All of this tends to strengthen our impression that both the participants in the debate and the issue about which they disagreed are worthy of our interest and respect.

It is attractive also because it ascribes to the Pudgalavādins a view of the person which is rather similar to what many people now would tend to accept, that a human being is an immensely complex and constantly changing

organization of physical particles, in whose intricate patterns of behaviour our feelings, intentions, thought and consciousness mysteriously inhere, and whose unique significance in the universe cannot be understood simply on the basis of an examination of its constituents. My account of the Pudgalavādins' concern for the humanity of the human being, their unwillingness to reduce the person to an assemblage of impersonal phenomena, recalls our own concern about the dehumanization of human beings in our increasingly technological society and the tendency to regard the person as no more than the physical elements of which it appears to be composed. The Pudgalavādins thus seem to be speaking to our time as well as to their own.

What I am of course trying to acknowledge here is that there are many ways in which an interpretation may be attractive, and not all of them have anything to do with its truth. The Pudgalavādins may in fact have had the concerns which I ascribe to them—I think it likely that they did—but they did not express them as I have in terms reminiscent of Western humanism, and the fact that these are important concerns for us has naturally no bearing at all on whether the interpretation itself is true or not. I think that the present interpretation is in fact fairly plausible, but there are several points in our evidence which it fails to account for, and which seem to me to suggest something rather different from anything that we have considered thus far.

First of all, there is the fact that the analogies which the Pudgalavādins used to explain the relationship between the *pudgala* and the aggregates are clearly inconsistent with our interpretation. We may recall the account ascribed to the Vātsīputrīya in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*:

> And how is fire conceived on the basis of fuel? Fire is not conceived without its fuel, nor can the fire be conceived as different from its fuel, nor as not different. For if they were different, the fuel would not be hot; but if they were not different, what is burned would be the same as what burns it. And so the *pudgala* is not conceived without the aggregates, nor can it be affirmed as different from the aggregates, since that would imply that it is eternal, nor as not different, since that would imply that it suffers annihilation. (AKB 9; DS ed. 1193.5–9)

The fuel is what the fire depends on, but the fire does not consist of logs and so on; its constituents are particles of heat, not pieces of wood. By analogy, then, the aggregates should not be constituents of the *pudgala*, should not be its parts, even though it depends on them.

There is also the analogy offered in the *Kathāvatthu*:

> Is the concept of the person based (*upādāya*) on physical form just as the concept of a shadow is based on the tree [which casts it]? Just as the concept of its shadow is based on the tree, and both the tree and its shadow are impermanent, is the concept of the person based on physical form, and both the physical form and the person are impermanent?
>
> No, one cannot say that....
>
> Just as the concept of its shadow is based on the tree, and the tree is one thing and its shadow another, is the concept of the person based on physical form, and the physical form is one thing and the person another?
>
> No, one cannot say that.... (KV 1.1.189)[1]

The commentary (KVA 25) makes it clear that the analogy is the Pudgalavādin's. (It also refers to the analogy of fire and fuel.) But the shadow, although identifiable only by reference to the tree, does not *consist* of the tree; the tree is only what it derives from. So here again the analogy would indicate that the *pudgala* derives from the aggregates but does not consist of them. In fact it is not even clear that the Pudgalavādin in the *Kathāvatthu* thinks of the *pudgala* as conceptual.

It is possible, of course, that these are simply not very good analogies, that the Pudgalavādins tried to suggest the irreducibility of the *pudgala* to its constituents by comparing it to a fire and the shadow of a tree, which are irreducible to fuel and the tree respectively precisely because the latter are not their constituents. But in fairness to the Pudgalavādins we should also consider the possibility that the analogies are exact, and that the Pudgalavādins did not think of the *pudgala* as a conceptual whole with the aggregates as its parts. It should be noted also that although the analogy with fire appears in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the *Tattvasiddhi*, where the *pudgala* is said to be conceptual, in the passage from the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* cited above the Vātsīputrīya explains the *pudgala* as neither substantial nor conceptual. The analogy is evidently felt to illuminate the nature of the *pudgala* whether the *pudgala* is thought of as conceptual or not.

Next, let us recall the argument used by the Vātsīputrīya in the *Tattvasiddhi*:

> Although it is said that the self is only a name and so on, this saying ought to be pondered deeply. If sentient beings are only names, then just

[1] Nālandā ed. 1.1.112; p. 44.

> as killing a clay ox does not entail the guilt of killing, so if one kills a real ox there should also be no guilt.... (T1646, 259c26–28)

We find a similar argument in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*:

> As some schools have previously said, the self exists because there is an account of it. Now we reply, the Buddha said that there is the concept (or designation) of the person; therefore this is its concomitant. If non-self were really the non-existence of the self, there could not be any killing of a living being or one who kills or anyone who is killed. (T1649, 465a15–18)[2]

The point in both this and the preceding passage seems to be that although the Buddha explained that the person exists conceptually, he did so only in order to show that the person is not independent of the five aggregates; he had no intention of denying the self altogether. This of course is consistent with our present interpretation and, with appropriate qualifications, would be accepted by the non-Pudgalavādins as well. What seems odd is that in the first passage killing an ox is contrasted with "killing" a clay ox. To kill a clay ox is presumably to smash it, and this (under normal circumstances) does not entail the unfortunate consequences that killing a real ox would. Smashing an image does not in itself count as karma.

This seems obvious enough; why is the Pudgalavādin drawing it to our attention? Apparently because both the real ox and the clay ox are supposed to have only nominal or conceptual existence, and yet the destruction of the one constitutes karma and the destruction of the other does not; there must then be different ways in which the two oxen are conceptual entities, or perhaps other factors in addition to their being conceptual, which would account for the distinction between them. Our first thought might be that the real ox is an organism and the clay ox is not; the clay ox is an "ox" only in the sense that the shape of the lump of clay has been made to resemble the shape of an ox. The shape of the lump of clay then inclines us to call it an ox in much the same way that the shape of a hill may suggest to us the appearance of an animal or a face. The shape of the real ox is supported by the whole intricate organization of the ox's body; the shape of the clay ox merely marks the spatial limits of a certain quantity of relatively homogeneous substance. Killing the ox produces an important (though perhaps initially subtle) change in the organization of its

2 See above, p. 85.

body; smashing the clay ox does not, we feel, make any comparable difference to the internal organization of the clay.

But the clay does have its own structure and to that extent is also a system, whose totality is defined by the shape which makes it resemble the ox. We might expect, then, that the wilful destruction of either system would constitute karma, but that the seriousness of the consequences would be proportional to the complexity of the system which had been destroyed. Otherwise we have to determine the threshold at which a system's complexity is sufficient for the law of karma to apply, or else abandon the idea that the destruction of *any* system, however complex, has any karmic (or moral) significance.

Since the Pudgalavādins and their opponents agree that there is no guilt in "killing" the clay ox but killing the real ox constitutes karma, it would seem that there must be a certain level of complexity at which the law of karma begins to apply. But what probably distinguishes the real ox from the clay ox for the Pudgalavādins and their opponents (and for us too when we are not thinking in terms of our current interpretation) is not the ox's complexity, but the fact that it is a living, sentient being. We tend of course to assume that an organism is sentient because of its complexity, and the appearance of sentience would then mark the threshold at which the complexity of a system becomes a basis for karma. But the Pudgalavādins and their opponents may not have made that assumption. In reminding us of the karmic significance of killing an ox, the Vātsīputrīya in the *Tattvasiddhi* may be insisting on something other than the irreducibility of a whole to its parts.

Further evidence suggesting that our interpretation may be too simple comes from the Sarvāstivādin *Mahāvibhāṣā*. We have already referred to a passage in which the *pudgala* is given as an example of "composite existence", one of five different kinds of existence. The whole passage is as follows:

> Some say that there are five kinds of existence. The first is nominal existence: tortoise hair, hare's horns, sky-flower chaplets and so on. The second is substantial existence: the abiding nature (*svabhāva*) of every *dharma*. The third is conceptual existence: pots, cloth, chariots, vehicles, an army, a forest, a cottage and so on. The fourth is composite existence: the *pudgala* conceived according to the combination of the aggregates. The fifth is relative existence: nearer and further banks, long and short things and so on. (T1545, 42a29–42b4)

What is remarkable here is that the *pudgala* is distinguished not only from entirely fictitious entities such as tortoise hairs, but also from conceptual entities such as pots and chariots. At least some of the Sarvāstivādins evidently recognized that the person, although conceived on the basis of the aggregates, is in some way different from other conceptual entities. This does not mean that they accepted the Pudgalavādins' contention that the person is "true and ultimate", but they seem at least to have been willing to concede that the nature of a person is not simply that of a system of interrelated parts.

Nevertheless, the expression "composite existence" does seem to suggest that the person is to be understood as something which like a pot or a chariot consists of parts. Is it possible that "composite existence" is distinguished from "conceptual existence" not because of any real difference between the two, but because the person is a conceptual entity which is of particular importance for the practice of Buddhism? That hardly seems likely; a tradition of Buddhism that teaches that the self is an illusion would surely not have much to gain by insisting on the uniqueness of the *pudgala*. But if the person is really different from other kinds of conceptual entity, how is it different? What kind of entity is it supposed to be?

Even if we grant that the *pudgala* is composite, it is evidently not the same kind of composite entity as a pot or a chariot. The person is something which continues through the entire series of its existences, dying and being reborn according to the law of karma. We might suppose then that the person *consists* of the whole series of systems of phenomena, the five aggregates of its present life *and* the five aggregates of each of its past lives and of each of its future lives. If that were the case, the present person would only be a momentary segment of the whole person, which would be an entity extending infinitely into the past and (for most of us at least) indefinitely into the future. The person in this sense would be something ungraspable as a whole.

But as we have already noted, the person was defined by the Vātsīputrīya in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* as "conceived by appropriating the present aggregates appropriated as internal" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.7f.). The present aggregates are in fact all that actually exist at any moment as constituents of the person; except for the Sarvāstivādins (and to a limited extent the Kāśyapīyas), all Buddhists, including the Pudgalavādins, would agree that the past and future aggregates do not actually exist. If the *pudgala* were a whole consisting of *all* of its aggregates, past, present and future, it would consist almost entirely of the non-existent. This would not create any difficulty for the non-Pudgalavādins, of course, but it might be embarrassing for anyone who claimed that the person is

"true and ultimate" to have to admit that most of what the person consists of does not exist. But in any case, the Vātsīputrīya's definition is surely consistent with how we actually speak and think of a person. A person is not like a piece of music, which can only be grasped in its entirety, as a temporal structure; any segment from the immense temporal continuum of the person's existence *is* the person. In our dealings with one another, we are not dealing with momentary fragments, but with whole people.

But the person *is* something which continues. How can it be conceived only on the basis of its present constituents? For they, of course, are constantly passing away and being replaced.

We may recall that the "concept according to the basis", that is, according to the aggregates, is only one of the ways in which the person is to be conceived. There is also the "concept according to transition": the person is conceived as passing from its past life to a present life, or from its present life to a future life. The transition is inconceivable on the basis of one life alone; it is after all a transition *from* something *to* something. The person thus conceived is not simply a whole consisting of its present constituents, but a whole in process, whose constituents were different in the past and will be different again in the future. It is not a relatively stable entity like a pot or a chariot, whose identity depends on the durability of its constituents; it is something more like a fire, whose instability is an essential feature of what it is. A fire conceived solely according to its constituents at a given moment, without taking into account the process to which they belong, is not really a fire at all. The person similarly does not *consist* of its past and future constituents, but its present identity cannot be properly conceived without them.

There is also the "concept according to cessation". We have already considered some of the difficulties inherent in this notion: the person who has attained Parinirvana can no longer be identified on the basis of any existing aggregates and yet cannot be said to be non-existent; the concept according to cessation "precludes eternalism" and yet the Pudgalavādins are willing to say that a person so conceived exists "in the Goal". How can we conceive of a person whose constituents no longer exist, for whom those aggregates "by which one identifying the Tathāgata might identify him" (M i 488) have passed away without any possibility of recurrence? How are we to make sense of a concept of the person based on the complete absence of any basis for such a conception? The concept according to cessation is supposed to be based on the final cessation of the aggregates; but as an event that cessation is past, no longer actual, and as a reality, Nirvana, it is surely impersonal. My suggestion was that the person who

has attained Parinirvana is conceived primarily on the basis of cessation, that is, Nirvana, and secondarily on the basis of the particular system of aggregates which has ceased. But however conceived, such a person is obviously not the kind of conceptual entity which our present interpretation proposes. And if it is not that, and not simply a fiction or a way of speaking, it is hard to imagine what sort of entity it is.

There is a further difficulty which arises from the fact that there *are* these three concepts of the person. We have taken it for granted that in this context a conceptual entity consists of a group of related phenomena gathered together under a single term. Such an entity can be considered a concept in the sense that it is a form in which the whole group of phenomena can be comprehended and handled conveniently in speech and thought. It is an entity in the sense that it serves as a single referent for the term under which the constituent phenomena are gathered. The person as a conceptual entity is thus the phenomena of the five aggregates taken together, conceived as a person.

According to this way of understanding it, the concept *by* which the person is conceived and the conceptual entity *as* which it is conceived are not really different things; they are more like the pattern according to which one arranges a group of pebbles and the pattern the pebbles form after they have been arranged. To conceive the person on the basis of the aggregates is to apprehend the aggregates according to the concept of a person, and that is to see the aggregates *as* a person. The concept is both the principle according to which the group is formed and the group as formed according to that principle.

Now all of this seems to work well enough in the case of the concept according to the basis, but as we have seen it does not work so well in the case of the other two concepts. The concept according to transition might in some sense be a way of seeing the transition from one life to the next as a person, but that transition is not itself a group of phenomena, although phenomena are certainly involved in it; and the concept according to cessation is by no means a way of seeing something complex as simple, but is if anything a way of ascribing the complexity of a person to the transcendent simplicity of Nirvana. They are in fact different concepts relating to different realities. But if a conceptual entity is not really different from its concept, are we dealing here with three different conceptual entities? Are there in fact three different kinds of person? Or is there one person variously conceived?

It is true that the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* speaks of "three kinds of person". But if these "three kinds of person" were each a distinct conceptual entity identified with one of the three concepts, what would become of the continuing

identity of the person? The Pudgalavādins argue against identifying the *pudgala* with the aggregates on the grounds that if they were identical the passing away of one set of the aggregates would also be the passing away of the person, and the arising of a new set of aggregates would then be the creation of a new person, whereas in reality what seems to be a new person is simply the former person reborn. If the person conceived according to its basis is a different conceptual entity from the person conceived according to its transition, then the one person passes away at death and a new person is created in the transition to the next life, and if the person conceived according to cessation is different from both, then it is one person that dies after attaining release and another person that exists (or at any rate is not non-existent) in Parinirvana. For the Pudgalavādins, a person that is a different entity at each stage of its existence is not really a person.

But if it is one person that is conceived now according to its basis, now according to its transition, and perhaps eventually according to cessation, how can it be a conceptual entity? We can understand how a substantial entity might be variously conceived, but surely a conceptual entity is constituted by our conception of it, and if the three concepts differ in both what they relate to and their mode of conception, the conceptual entities corresponding to them must surely also be different. If there is only one person (for each series of the five aggregates), its nature must be independent of our various conceptions of it, and in that case what sense does it make to speak of it as a concept or a conceptual entity?

It might be suggested that the concept of the one person is based on the concepts according to its basis, its transition and its cessation. The person who persists through successive lives and attains Parinirvana would thus be a conceptual entity consisting of conceptual entities which in turn consist of various *dharmas*. But the notion of the one person as a whole consisting of conceptual entities corresponding to various stages and relationships in its history is open to objections which we have already noted: that a person at any given time is not conceived as a fragment of the temporally extended whole to which it belongs, but as the entire person at that particular time; and that a person conceived as such a temporally extended whole would be a whole consisting almost entirely of past and future *dharmas*, that is, of constituents non-existent at that particular time—it is hard to imagine how the existence of such a whole could be regarded as "true and ultimate".

A more plausible suggestion is that the person as a conceptual entity is the person conceived according to its basis, a whole consisting of the *dharmas* of the five aggregates, and the concepts according to transition and cessation are simply

ways of conceiving or designating the person in relation to the past or future, or as absent in Parinirvana. We might accordingly distinguish between the concept according to the basis as a constitutive concept and the concepts according to transition and cessation as representative concepts. There is thus only one kind of concept by which the person is constituted although there are other kinds of concept by which it may be represented, and so there is only one kind of person, the whole formed by the five aggregates, which persists through successive lives as the *dharmas* of the five aggregates arise and pass away.

But there are difficulties with this explanation also. The concept according to transition would appear to be constitutive as well as representative, in the sense that the *pudgala* has to be conceived as persisting, and not simply as a whole formed by the aggregates at a given moment. There should thus be two kinds of person after all, constituted by the two kinds of concept, and the objections that we have already noted will accordingly apply. We can deal with this problem, however, by saying that the same system of the five aggregates at a given time can be considered either as a whole or as a system in transition. The two kinds of concept can then be understood as constituting not two different kinds of person, but rather two aspects of the same person. The person comprehensively conceived would thus include both.

The problem which Nāgārjuna points to in his critique of time (MMK 19.2), that in a temporal relation (apart from simultaneity), at least one of the terms is necessarily either past or future and thus non-existent, would perhaps not have troubled the Pudgalavādins. As long as one term exists, the other can be represented conceptually; in this way the present person, even in the absence of its past and future constituent *dharmas*, can be known as a being that persists through time. Such a response would not satisfy Nāgārjuna, who was attacking the notion of the real *dharmas* which the Pudgalavādins were willing to assume as the basis for the concept of the person; but Nāgārjuna's own position (if he would call it that) was not without its difficulties, and in any case the Pudgalavādins had less stake, I think, in the substantiality of the *dharmas* than the Theravādins, Sarvāstivādins and Sautrāntikas. The Pudgalavādins, after all, were willing to recognize a conceptual entity as "true and ultimate".

There is certainly something mysterious about our awareness of temporal succession when any representation of past or future phenomena can only be a present representation of them. How can the pastness of something past be represented in the present? But if there is a problem here, as there seems to be, it is one which confronts any account of temporal existence, including

Nāgārjuna's. The Pudgalavādins' account of the person in time is not weaker than anyone else's for having failed to solve it.

But there remains a more serious difficulty with our explanation. The person that has attained Parinirvana is said to be neither existent nor non-existent. Now if the person were not supposed to be "true and ultimate", we could make sense of this by saying that if the person is unreal, neither existence nor non-existence can be properly predicated of the person either while alive or after attaining Parinirvana. This interpretation seems to be supported by the Buddha's description of the Tathāgata even while alive as "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean". But for the Pudgalavādins, the person while alive is supposed to exist, because its constituent *dharmas* exist, and the whole which they constitute (according to our current interpretation) is supposed to be "true and ultimate". That being the case, when the constituent *dharmas* have passed away without any recurrence, the person which they constituted should be quite simply non-existent. There is no longer any constitutive concept of the person because the *dharmas* which were previously taken together as a conceptual whole now no longer exist. The person is known only by representative concepts as having been formerly such and such a person (on the basis of a particular system of the five aggregates) and as now fully extinct in Parinirvana. As far as I can see, the only way in which the person could be said to be not non-existent in Parinirvana would be in the sense that Parinirvana is here identified as that particular person's Parinirvana: "Such and such a person has passed away and will never be reborn." But by that token, anything which existed formerly and now does not could be said to be "not non-existent".

Might that not after all be what they meant? Not if the person is supposed to be a conceptual whole consisting of real parts. If the parts do not exist, the whole is likewise nonexistent; if the parts, the aggregates, do not exist in Parinirvana, neither does the person. If the person is said to be involved somehow in Parinirvana because it is the Parinirvana of that person, that is not to say that the person exists in Parinirvana (or is even "not non-existent" there), but that the concept of Parinirvana in this case is related to the concept of the person; we identify it as the final non-existence of that person. For the person did exist formerly, as a conceptual whole constituted by the five aggregates, and now does not. The concept of the person to which the concept of Parinirvana is in this case linked merely represents the person that formerly existed. It cannot constitute the person as something "true and ultimate" without the real *dharmas* of which it is supposed to consist.

It seems that the *pudgala* cannot after all be identified with the three concepts of the person, or even with the concept according to the basis, as a conceptual whole consisting of the five aggregates. Yet that is surely what we have found stated in our sources: that the *pudgala* is conceptual, that it is conceived on the basis of the present aggregates, and that, as Harivarman puts it in the *Tattvasiddhi*, "it is the combination of the five aggregates that we call the self". It is possible that the Pudgalavādins simply failed to recognize a fundamental inconsistency in their doctrines, but that is something we cannot assume, at least until we can be pretty sure that we have not misunderstood the doctrines. But in what way might we have misunderstood them? Where do we go from here?

The distinction that we found it necessary to make between constitutive and representative concepts suggests a possibility. There are evidently different kinds of concept. Perhaps we have somehow misunderstood (though our sources seem clear enough) what the Pudgalavādins had in mind when they spoke of the *pudgala* as conceptual. We followed the explanation which Vasubandhu gives in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* when he distinguishes between concept and substance, *prajñapti* and *dravya*: "If, like physical form and so on, something is a separate entity, its existence is substantial; if it is composite, like milk and so on, it is conceptual" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.1f.). We have assumed that, conversely, if the *pudgala* is conceptual, it is composite, and what it is composed of must of course be the five aggregates. But there would appear to be other ways in which the term '*prajñapti*' can be understood. Perhaps Vasubandhu's explanation was only of '*prajñapti*' in the particular sense which he thought relevant to his critique of the Pudgalavāda. His understanding of the term might not be theirs. It is clearly time to look more carefully at what is meant, or might be meant, by the term '*prajñapti*'.

Chapter 9

Concepts

IT IS unfortunate that there is no discussion of *prajñapti* (apart from the three concepts of the person) in the few Pudgalavādin texts that have come down to us. The nature of *prajñapti was* explored, however, and with considerable thoroughness, by the Theravādins, and to some extent also by the Sarvāstivādins and Sautrāntikas. Our own inquiry is thus unavoidably limited to non-Pudgalavādin sources, but to the extent that there may have been general agreement among the Early Schools concerning the nature of *prajñapti*, the understanding that we are able to gain from these sources should at least serve to suggest further possibilities in our interpretation of the *pudgala* as a conceptual entity.

One of the first things that may strike us about the term '*prajñapti*' is an ambiguity analogous to what we find with the word 'truth' (or '*satya*'), which can mean either a true statement, one that is correct in what it says about some actual state of affairs, or the state of affairs itself as indicated by that statement. We have already seen that the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* explains the Four Noble Truths not as true statements made by the Buddha, but as the various phenomena or entities whose actual occurrence makes these statements true; the Truth of Suffering, for example, is said to be the aggregates, elements and spheres since those, as created dharmas, are of the nature of suffering. The term '*prajñapti*' similarly can mean either a designation or the concept or conceptual entity indicated by that designation.

'*Prajñapti*' is a noun formed from the causative of the verb '*pra-jñā*', "to understand". A *prajñapti*, then, is a "causing to understand"; it is something which brings about understanding. Since language is the instrument by which we organize our perceptions and memories into more general patterns, it is not surprising that the *prajñapti* is associated with language. We may recall that the Buddha spoke of the "worldly appellations, expressions, turns of speech and designations" (D i 202)[1] which he used without being misled by them, and in that passage the term "designations" is in fact a translation of '*paññatti*' (the Pali cognate of '*prajñapti*'), glossed by the commentary as "*nāmapaññatti*", that is, "*paññatti* as name" (DA ii 382).

1 See above, p. 14.

It seems clear that when the Buddha said that milk, butter and so on and the three modes of personality were "worldly appellations, expressions, turns of speech and designations", what he meant was that the terms for milk and so on have (in some sense) no real referent. But we do use these terms to refer to things, and if the things they refer to are not real, we seem to have no course but to call them unreal or apparent things, things somehow constituted by our use of the terms that identify them. These "unreal things" will then be constructs of our thought, forms in which the diverse flux of reality can be more easily grasped and managed. These constructs are thus things which "bring about understanding", and so they also can be called *prajñapti*. It is in this sense that the *prajñapti* is a concept or conceptual entity.

The Theravāda recognized this distinction between the two senses of '*prajñapti*' (or '*paññatti*'). The *prajñapti* as designation is the "*nāmapaññatti*" (which we have already noted above); the *prajñapti* as conceptual entity is the "*atthapaññatti*", *prajñapti* as object or meaning. The two kinds of *prajñapti* are correlative: the *nāmapaññatti* is what brings about understanding (*paññāpana*) of the *atthapaññatti*; the *atthapaññatti* is what is to be made understood (*paññā-petabba*) by the *nāmapaññatti*. The *nāmapaññatti* is again of two types: designation of what exists (*vijjamāna*) and designation of what does not exist (*avijjamāna*), according as its referent is real or merely conceptual.[2]

We seem at this point to have three kinds of *prajñapti* (the two kinds of *nāmapaññatti* and the *atthapaññatti*), and since the *atthapaññatti* is the conceptual entity corresponding to terms for composites like 'milk' and 'person', we might assume that the *avijjamānapaññatti*, the designation which has no actually occurring referent, will have as its unreal or apparent referent the *atthapaññatti*, the conceptual entity corresponding to its designation, while the *vijjamāna-paññatti*, the designation with an existing referent, will have for its referent not the *atthapaññatti* but an actually occurring *dharma*. But the matter turns out to be more complex than this. The commentary on the *Puggalapaññatti* gives a list of different kinds of what appear to be *atthapaññattis*, including the "concept based on" (*upādāpaññatti*), such as a chariot or a person, the "relational concept"

2 The distinction between the *nāmapaññatti* and the *atthapaññatti* is made explicitly in the 12th century CE in the *Paramatthavinicchaya* of Anuruddha II (Warder, 1971: 193 f.), but it was probably understood much earlier; as we have seen, the term '*nāmapaññatti*' appears in the commentaries. The terms '*paññāpana*' and '*paññāpetabba*', which seem to be equivalent to those in reference, are found in the commentary on the *Puggalapaññatti* (PPA 173) and in Buddhadatta's *Abhidhammāvatāra* (Warder, 1971: 190f.); so also '*vijja-mānapaññatti*' and '*avijjamānapaññatti*'.

(*upanidhāpaññatti*), such as long or short, and so on. The fifth in the list is the "conformable concept", the *tajjāpaññatti*.[3] This is explained as follows:

> That which brings about understanding in relation to the essential nature (*sabhāva*) of any *dhamma*—earth, fire, hardness, heat and so on—is the *tajjāpaññatti*. (PPA 174)

A few lines later we are told that the *tajjāpaññatti* is a *vijjamānapaññatti*, a concept (or designation?) with an existing referent.

Perhaps we are mistaken in thinking that the *tajjāpaññatti* is an *atthapaññatti*. If it has an existing referent and is what brings about understanding rather than what is to be made understood, surely it is a *nāmapaññatti*. But all of the *prajñaptis* in the list can be understood as *nāmapaññattis* as well as *atthapaññattis*: for every conceptual entity there is a corresponding designation. In fact all of the *prajñaptis* are explained as *paññāpana*, "bringing about understanding". Should any of them be regarded as *atthapaññattis*? The actual terms '*nāmapaññatti*' and '*atthapaññatti*' are not used in the commentary's explanation; the expression that seems to be equivalent to '*atthapaññatti*', '*paññāpetabba*' ("what is to be made understood"), appears only in the account of the "concept based on". It seems reasonable to suppose that most of the other kinds of *prajñapti* in the list can also be understood as *atthapaññatti*, but the text does not actually say so.

A much later text, however, Kassapa's *Mohavicchedanī*, gives the same list of *prajñaptis* and explicitly describes them as *atthapaññatti*:

> Outside of the commentaries but according to the method of the teachers, there are six other *paññattis*: the concept based on, the relational concept, the collective concept, the additive concept, the conformable concept (*tajjāpaññatti*) and the concept of continuity, which are called *atthapaññatti*. (MoV 245)

[3] This use of '*tajja*' ("suitable, conformable") seems to be based on a passage in the *Mahāhatthipadopamasutta* (M i 190): "*ajjhattikañ ce āvuso cakkhuṃ aparibhinnaṃ hoti bāhirā ca rūpā na āpāthaṃ āgacchanti no ca tajjo samannāhāro hoti, n' eva tāva tajjassa viññāṇabhāgassa pātubhāvo hoti*: If the internal eye, sirs, is undamaged but external forms do not come within its range and there is no corresponding concentration, then there will still be no appearance of the corresponding part of consciousness." (The passage continues with the cases in which external forms come within the range of the eye but there is no corresponding concentration, and in which there *is* the corresponding concentration and so the corresponding part of consciousness appears.) The commentary (MA ii 229) explains "*tajjo samannāhāro* (corresponding concentration)" as "the attention (*manasikāra*) arising when the *bhavaṅga* (subliminal consciousness) is directed according to the eye and a form," and "*tajja*" as "*tadanurūpa* (fitting, suitable)".

A little later, Kassapa adds that as *nāmapaññatti* the *tajjāpaññatti* (among others) is considered to be a *vijjamānapaññatti* (MoV 246). This confirms our impression that all of the *prajñaptis* in the list are (or can be regarded as) *atthapaññattis*, and that in some cases the designation (*nāmapaññatti*) corresponding to the *atthapaññatti* has an existing referent. But the *atthapaññatti* is surely what its corresponding *nāmapaññatti* refers to, and the *atthapaññatti*, as a conceptual entity, is not something which actually exists. Unless Kassapa's explanation is simply self-contradictory, the *tajjāpaññatti* as designation (*nāmapaññatti*) has two referents, the *atthapaññatti* and the actually occurring *dharma*. Or is there some sense in which the *tajjāpaññatti* as *atthapaññatti* could be identified with the *dharma* which is the *nāmapaññatti*'s existing referent?

The explanation might be as follows. The referent of the *tajjāpaññatti* as designation is the actually occurring *dharma*; but the designation is useful precisely when the *dharma* is not occurring, or when, although present, it is not clearly present to consciousness. What is clearly present we may deal with directly; but to deal with what is not present we have to use thought and language, concepts and designations. Now when we are dealing with a *dharma* which is not present, our concern is not usually with any particular occurrence of the *dharma*; we deal with the *dharma* as a type, and the designation for it will refer to any of the particular instances of the type which fit the context. The *tajjāpaññatti* as designation (*nāmapaññatti*) can be understood then as referring generally to the particular *dharmas*, but not specifically to any of those *dharmas* in particular. Its referent is the particular *dharmas* taken generally, that is, conceptually; for the *dharmas* are now conceived as instances of the type to which they belong. The concept by which the particular *dharmas* are thus taken generally may be thought of as the referent for the *tajjāpaññatti* as designation when the *dharmas* it refers to are themselves not clearly present, since even when absent they are referred to as comprised within that concept. The concept will of course be the *atthapaññatti*.

It will be recalled that the *tajjāpaññatti* was explained as "that which brings about understanding in relation to the essential nature (*sabhāva*) of any *dhamma*". A *dharma*'s essential nature or "own-being" (Sanskrit *svabhāva*) is what constitutes the identity of that *dharma*, the hardness of earth, for example, or the heat of fire. In fact the own-being *is* the *dharma*: what is meant by 'earth' as a term for one of the four material elements is precisely the hardness which was held to be a basic constituent of all material existence. To understand the nature of a *dharma* is thus to know the *dharma* itself, but also to recognize the type of

which that particular *dharma* is an instance. Even when no *dharmas* of that type are clearly present, their *svabhāva* may be known conceptually through the *tajjāpaññatti*, and since the *svabhāva*, properly speaking, is the *dharma* itself and so is absent, knowledge of it must be mediated by a conceptual object, the *atthapaññatti* to which the *tajjāpaññatti* as designation conventionally refers.

That this interpretation may in fact be right is suggested by the explanation which Paramārtha gives of an apparently similar kind of *prajñapti* in his Chinese translation of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. The passage in which it occurs has no counterpart in our present Sanskrit text or in either of the other translations; it seems likely that it is Paramārtha's own explanation, but we cannot rule out the possibility that the Sanskrit text which he used varied significantly from ours. Paramārtha himself was a Mahāyānist, but in explaining the text of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* he would surely have stayed within the doctrinal limits of the work which he was explaining; his account should then at least be consistent with the views of the Sarvāstivādins or the Sautrāntikas. In any case, we have here an explanation indicative of the way in which this problem was understood by an eminent Buddhist well trained in *abhidharma*. The fact that Paramārtha (or whoever else may have been responsible for this passage) was not a Theravādin is actually to our advantage, since our aim here is not primarily to elucidate the Theravādin understanding of *prajñapti*, but to suggest how the Pudgalavādins might have understood it; and in the absence of any direct evidence in the surviving Pudgalavādin texts, the occurrence of somewhat similar accounts in texts from a number of schools should make it more likely that the interpretation in question was at least widely accepted.

Paramārtha distinguishes three kinds of conceptual existence. A conceptual entity may exist as a concept of shape (由形相假有 *yóu xíngxiàng jiǎ yǒu*, *saṃsthānaprajñaptisat*), as a concept of combination (由聚集假故有 *yóu jùjí jiǎ gù yǒu*, *samavāyaprajñaptisat*), or as a concept of manifestation (由顯示假故有 *yóu xiǎnshì jiǎ gù yǒu*, *saṃdarśanaprajñaptisat*). Concerning the third of these, he says:

> The ultimately real (真實義 *zhēnshí yì*, *paramārtha*) is manifested through words, phrases and syllables: knowledge (智 *zhì*, *buddhi*) of it is produced on the basis of words, phrases and syllables relating to the ultimately real. When one has entered into meditation, [knowledge] cannot be based on words and so on, and when one has emerged from meditation, it cannot be based on the ultimately real. Therefore the words

> and so on and this knowledge exist as a concept of manifestation. (T1559, 268c17-20)

The knowledge referred to here is evidently the "knowledge subsequently obtained" (*pṛṣṭalabdhajñāna*) which arises directly from the insight gained through meditation into the true nature of *dharmas*. The insight itself can arise only when the mind is concentrated in meditation, but knowledge of what is realized by that insight can be sustained afterward through language expressive of what is known. As it says elsewhere in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*,

> For me birth is destroyed; I see no further becoming for me after this: so he says by force of the knowledge gained in meditation when he has emerged from meditation. (T1559, 288a8–10; AKB 7.12ab; DS ed. 1055.6f.)

This knowledge is conventional since it is supported by language, its immediate object having only conceptual existence; "what is only a product of words and devoid of essence (體 *ti*, *svabhāva*) is conventional" (T1559, 268c21). But it is nevertheless knowledge of the ultimately real, since the words relate to what was known directly through meditation, in this case, the *dharmas* of the five aggregates understood according to the Truths of Suffering and its Origin (AKB 7.4d, 5a; DS ed. 1036.18–1037.2). To know these *dharmas* in their true nature is to know also that the process which leads to their recurrence has come to an end: "birth is destroyed." The function of the "concept of manifestation", then, is to manifest in ordinary consciousness the *dharmas* whose nature is known directly in meditation.

It is to be noted that the concept is twofold: "the words and so on and this knowledge exist as a concept of manifestation." That the "words and so on" are *prajñapti* is of course obvious; the Theravādins would describe them as "*nāma-paññatti*". But the knowledge (*buddhi*) which is "produced on the basis of words, phrases and syllables relating to the ultimately real" is clearly not those "words and so on" upon which it depends; and the knowledge as an actually occurring *dharma* is surely not conceptual but substantial. In another part of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, the term '*buddhi*' is used interchangeably with '*vijñāna*' in a discussion of whether the object of knowledge is necessarily existent (AKB 5.27; DS ed. 815ff.). Yaśomitra identifies *buddhi* with *anāsravā prajñā* or pure understanding (*Vyākhyā* on AKB 6.54cd; DS ed. 985.6–8),[4] and

[4] Wogihara ed. 580; tr. La Vallée Poussin, 1971: vol. 4, 247, n. 4 (cont.).

the Theravādin *Nettippakaraṇa* likewise gives '*buddhi*' as a synonym for '*paññā*'(NP 54). But both *vijñāna* and *prajñā* are included within the five aggregates and so cannot be described as "only a product of words and devoid of essence". It might conceivably be the words and knowledge together which form a conceptual entity, but then the concept of manifestation would seem to be ontologically indistinguishable from any other concept in which a number of different *dharmas* are taken together as a single entity.

Perhaps the knowledge is not a constituent of the concept of manifestation, as Paramārtha's phrasing seems to suggest, but rather the condition by which the "words and so on" become that particular kind of designation or concept. Each of the three kinds of conceptual entity which he distinguishes is after all "a product of words"; what makes this the concept of manifestation is the knowledge based on it, in which the ultimately real is manifested. Each of the other two concepts presents as an entity what is really an arrangement or aggregation of *dharmas*; this one represents the true nature of things.

But is this to say any more than that the "words and so on" have meaning? Words that in some way express the ultimately real can surely be said to manifest it; to mention the knowledge in which the real is manifested hardly seems necessary. But if the knowledge is neither simply a constituent of the concept of manifestation nor a condition for its occurrence, and if the knowledge is a *dharma* in its own right and not merely a conceptual entity, what are we to make of the statement that the words and the knowledge exist as a concept of manifestation? Perhaps Paramārtha expressed himself unclearly, or perhaps I have mistaken the meaning of what he said; but it seems that what we have here is a real *dharma*, the knowledge, which is also in some sense a concept.

The description of two quite different things, the words and the knowledge, as a concept of manifestation naturally recalls the Theravādin distinction between the *nāmapaññatti* and the *atthapaññatti*. The "words and so on", as we have noted, are obviously a *nāmapaññatti*. Might an awareness of *dharmas* not directly present but indicated by the *nāmapaññatti* somehow constitute a corresponding *atthapaññatti*?

On the face of it, this would be impossible. The *atthapaññatti* is "what is to be made understood", the object of understanding. The *buddhi* ought to be the understanding (or knowledge, or awareness) of that object. The occurrence of the *buddhi* may require the presence of such an object, but it is surely not the object itself. But the term '*buddhi*', like 'knowledge', means not only the act of knowing but also that which is known, the content of the knowledge. And when the *dharmas* that are known are not directly present, the content of the knowledge

will be an apparent object in which the absent or obscured *dharmas* are manifested. This apparent object, standing conventionally, conceptually, for the real object which is not immediately present, might be considered an *atthapaññatti*.

In the case of the *tajjāpaññatti*, then, we have an *atthapaññatti* which is not composite or even relational in any very obvious sense. In meditation the *dharmas* can be known directly; at other times they are represented to our awareness by the *tajjāpaññatti* as a conceptual object. But what is the nature of this conceptual object? Other kinds of *prajñapti* can be taken as particular ways of grouping or ordering existing dharmas; as *atthapaññattis* they can be understood as consisting of the *dharmas* themselves grouped or ordered in those particular ways. In knowing such an *atthapaññatti*, one does not know a distinct entity of any kind; the *dharmas* themselves are what is known, but they are known through the *prajñapti* as forming a particular system or structure. The *tajjāpaññatti*, however, does not represent any grouping or ordering of *dharmas* but rather the *dharmas* themselves as instances of a particular type: the *tajjāpaññatti* "brings about understanding in relation to the essential nature of any *dharma*." Although conventionally identified with the various occurrences of the *dharma*, it is surely simple, as it represents the same nature in all of those occurrences. It would seem to share in the simplicity of the *dharma* which it represents.

But what *is* this non-composite *prajñapti*? It is not the *dharma*, since that is absent, or at any rate not clearly present. It is not the words; otherwise it would be simply a *nāmapaññatti* with an absent or obscure referent. It must presumably be something mental, something like what we normally mean by "concept". As we have noted, the *buddhi* which Paramārtha identified, along with the "words and so on", as a concept of manifestation might be understood as the content of that knowledge, as the form in which the true nature of the *dharma* is manifested to our consciousness when the *dharmas* themselves are absent. But the exact nature of this conceptual object remains unclear.

There is in fact a specific activity of the mind by which absent *dharmas* of some particular type can be represented and thus recognized as the various occurrences of that *dharma*; it is *saṃjñā*, the third of the five aggregates. According to the *Abhidharmakośa*, "*saṃjñā* has the nature of taking up a sign (*nimitta*)" (AK 1.14cd; DS ed. 48.5). The commentary gives as examples of *nimitta* "blue, yellow, long, short, female, male, friendly, unfriendly, pleasant, unpleasant and so on". Yaśomitra adds that the *nimitta* is "a particular aspect (*avasthā*) of a thing", and that "taking up" means "distinguishing".[5]

[5] Wogihara ed. 37.

Buddhaghosa in his *Atthasālinī* explains that the function of *saññā* (the Pali cognate of '*saṃjñā*') is "recognition" (AS 110). *Saṃjñā* is thus the distinguishing of those aspects of things by which they can be identified and recognized when they occur again.

We find similar accounts of *saṃjñā* in our Pudgalavādin sources. The *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* as translated by Saṅghadeva (the *Sānfǎdù lùn*) says that *saṃjñā* "is explained as a receiving of various appearances" (T 1506, 26b3). The other translation, Kumārabuddhi's *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, is somewhat different: "*Saṃjñā* is explained as an accumulating of similarities" (T 1505, 11c15). We can understand "accumulating" (增益 *zēngyì*) as a more precise equivalent for the term translated in the *Sānfǎdù lùn* as "receiving" (受 *shòu*). Both are reminiscent of the *Abhidharmakośa*'s "taking up" (*udgrahaṇa*); one wonders whether the original term in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* might have been '*saṃgrahaṇa*'. "Similarities" does not seem at first sight to be very close to "various appearances" (形像差别 *xíngxiàng chābié*), but the similarity does not have to be understood as the mutual resemblance of things; it could be rather the respect in which they are similar, the "particular aspect" which *saṃjñā* distinguishes and which then serves as the similitude or likeness by which things of the same type, whether present or absent, may be identified with each other. And '*xíngxiàng*', which I have translated as "appearance", can also mean "likeness" or "image". The only real difference between the two translations seems to be the lack of anything in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě* that would correspond to "various" in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*.

Neither translation says that what *saṃjñā* takes up, receives or accumulates is the *nimitta*; they say rather that it is an appearance or likeness. It is possible that the original text of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* had some such word as '*sādṛśya*' or '*pratibhāsā*'. But there is also an explanation of *saṃjñā* in the Tibetan translation of the *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya*, in the chapter on the Four Truths according to the Sāṃmitīyas, which is very close to the account in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*. "The aggregate of *saṃjñā*," it says, "is a *dharma* whose nature is to take up various appearances" (P 5865, 65c3). The "appearances" are "*rnam pa rnams*"; '*rnam pa*' is the usual Tibetan equivalent for '*ākāra*', which also has the meaning of "aspect"; and "aspect" is the sense in which I took "*avasthā*" in Yaśomitra's explanation of '*nimitta*'. This suggests that in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* likewise the original term may have been '*ākāra*' with a meaning very much like that of '*nimitta*' as understood by Yaśomitra.

Whatever the original term, the fact that Saṅghadeva and Kumārabuddhi both translated it by expressions that mean "likeness" or "image" is surely significant.

The remembered aspect or appearance of a thing can certainly serve as a sign (*nimitta*) by which other things of the same type can be recognized; but what seems to have been most important to the translators was the fact that this aspect or appearance can be present to consciousness even in the absence of the things to which it belongs. It is an *image* by which things absent can be represented.

"Image" is in fact a normal meaning of the term '*nimitta*'; we find it used, for example, in a passage in the *Saṃyuttanikāya* which refers to seeing the reflection of one's face in a mirror (S iii 105). And that this is not an unusual interpretation of the *nimitta* which is "taken up" by *saṃjñā* is evident from Xuánzàng's translation of the explanation of *saṃjñā* which we have already noted in the *Abhidharmakośa*. The earlier translation, that by Paramārtha, renders '*nimitta*' by "相 *xiàng*" (T1559, 164bL7), which means "mark" or "characteristic"; here the *nimitta* is clearly understood as a sign or aspect. But Xuánzàng translates '*nimitta*' as "像 *xiàng*", which means "image" (T1558, 3c28). He uses the same term in his account of *saṃjñā* in the *Chéng wéishì lùn* (成唯識論), his commentary on the *Triṃśikā* of Vasubandhu (T1585, 11c22).

Pǔguāng's (普光) subcommentary on Xuánzàng's translation of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* explains "像 *xiàng*" as meaning "the particular characteristics and general characteristics of *dharmas*" (T1821, 25b20). The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* elsewhere defines the particular characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*) as the *svabhāva*; the general characteristics are impermanence, suffering, emptiness and selflessness (AKB 6.14cd; DS ed. 902.9f.). But we have already seen that the *svabhāva*, the essential nature of a *dharma*, is that in relation to which the *tajjāpaññatti* brings about understanding. It looks as if the *ākāra* or *nimitta*, understood here as a mental image of *dharmas* not directly present, might be that conceptual object whose nature we have been hoping to discover, the *tajjāpaññatti* as *atthapaññatti*.

What we seem to have, then, is a mental image which is a conceptual entity and which can be thought of as the content of a certain kind of knowledge (*buddhi*) and in that sense as the knowledge itself. I have already suggested that the image is conceptual not because it is composite—it is surely simple as what it represents is simple, the *svabhāva* of *dharmas*—but because it does represent as single and present what is in reality absent and manifold, an indefinite number of occurrences of the *dharma* in question. In representing something else, in being conventionally identified with what it is not, it has a character similar to that of a designation; it functions conceptually.

The position of this *nimitta* or mental image is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, it is meant to be identified with the *dharmas* which it represents, and to

which it is qualitatively and formally similar. On the other hand, it is hardly to be distinguished from the *saṃjñā* by which it is "taken up", for as a mental phenomenon it comes into being with the particular *saṃjñā* which apprehends it; indeed, the *saṃjñā* could be thought of as simply the occurrence of the image itself with the peculiar significance which it has as *nimitta*. The term '*saṃjñā*' is in fact sometimes used to mean an image or idea. In the *Saṅgītisutta*, for example, Sāriputta says,

> Here, friends, a monk attends to the image (*saññā*) of light, concentrates on the image of daylight, by night as by day, by day as by night, and so with mind clear and uncovered develops a mind that is full of brightness. (D iii 223)

What we have here is a meditative practice, a "cultivation of concentration" (*samādhibhāvanā*), in which the image of light is to be maintained in the practitioner's awareness even when no light is physically present; and in this way, we are told, the mind, filled with light, is able to gain knowledge and vision. The *saññā* which is the object of concentration seems clearly to be what would otherwise be called an *ākāra* or *nimitta*.

But if the image itself is the *saṃjñā*, and if the *saṃjñā* is a real *dharma*, the third of the five aggregates, surely the image is something real and not merely conceptual. Here again we must distinguish between the image as it is in itself and the image according to its conventional function. The image in itself is something real; but (whether called *ākāra*, *nimitta* or *saṃjñā*) as a representation of what is not directly present, it is conceptual. But it seems that a conceptual entity of this kind, when used as an object of concentration, can transform the mind of the meditator and thus give access to truth.

A form of meditation in which the power of the image is particularly evident is the meditation on the ten "spheres of totalization" (*kṛtsnāyatana*; Pali *kasiṇāyatana*). These spheres of totalization are the four material elements (earth, water, fire and wind), the four colours (blue, yellow, red and white), space and consciousness. In each case the object of meditation is extended until it is all-encompassing or "total". Concerning the meditation on blue, for example, the Sarvāstivādin *Mahāvibhāṣā* says,

> As a totality of blue, whether above, below or to the side, non-dual and unlimited, one produces an idea (想 *xiǎng*, *saṃjñā*) of blue.... To produce a single idea of blue means that by subjective attention (勝解作意

> *shèngjiě zuòyì, adhimuktimanaskāra*) one produces a single idea of blue in every place. (T1545, 441a26–b1)

It is the idea of blue which is produced and extended, not any blue which is objectively present. Yaśomitra explains *adhimuktimanaskāra* (in his *Vyākhyā* on AK 2.72; DS ed. 370.18)[6] as "an action of the mind according to belief (*adhimukti*), not on the basis of a real object (*bhūtārtha*)". Harivarman in his *Tattvasiddhi* explains that in the earth totalization it is by power of belief (信解 *xìnjiě*, *adhimukti*) that everything is seen as earth; it is not, of course, that everything is actually transformed into earth (T1646, 346b25). But the image of earth is able, through the meditator's determined belief in it, to modify his experience of what is actually there.

By far the most detailed account of this meditative technique is in a Theravādin work, Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*. There the meditator is advised, in the case of the earth totalization, to make a disc of fine, "dawn-coloured" clay in some secluded place and to use that as an object of concentration. He is to attend not to the colour of the disc, although of course he sees it, nor to the hardness which he knows to be the characteristic of earth, but to its designation or concept, using any of the various terms for the earth to keep it present to his awareness. When he can visualize the disc with his eyes closed as clearly as he can see it with his eyes open, the "learning image" (*uggahanimitta*, image for taking up) is said to have been produced. Now he no longer looks at the physical disc, but returns to his own quarters and continues to contemplate the visual image.

After long practice with the *uggahanimitta*, there arises the "counterpart image" (*paṭibhāganimitta*).

> This is the difference between the earlier learning image and this counterpart image. In the learning image any fault in the *kasiṇa* [i.e. the clay as an object for totalization] is evident. But the counterpart image, like the disc of a mirror drawn from its bag, like a well washed dish of mother-of-pearl, like the moon's disc emerged from within a cloud, like a crane before a thundercloud, arises as if breaking out from the learning image, a hundredfold, a thousandfold more purified than that. But it has neither colour nor shape; for if it were like that, it would be cognizable by the eye, gross, accessible to comprehension and stamped with the three characteristics. But it is not like that. For this is only something born of

6 Wogihara ed. 247.

> perception as a mere form of appearance for one who has gained concentration. (VM 4.31)

This "counterpart image" may seem on first reading to be an image like the learning image, although one which is exceptionally bright and pure. But we are told that it has neither colour nor shape, and so it is clear that it cannot be an image in any strict sense of the term. It is rather something like an idea, a dimensionless object of the intuitive awareness of earth itself.

The similes by which it is described suggest something transcendent. Elsewhere in the *Visuddhimagga* Buddhaghosa compares Nirvana to the moon emerging from thick clouds (VM 22.8ff.). And like Nirvana, the counterpart image is not "stamped with the three characteristics" of created dharmas, whether these are understood as arising, changing and passing away, or as impermanence, suffering and selflessness. But Nirvana (for most schools, at least) is a reality, whereas this is described as "a mere form of appearance" (*upaṭṭhānākāramattaṃ*). It is "only something born of perception (*saññā*)".

Although unreal, the counterpart image is the means by which (according to traditional opinion) the expert in this kind of meditation can not only modify his experience of the world but can actually walk on water, fly through the air and so forth. If he wishes to walk on water, he produces the counterpart image in the earth totalization and extends it over a limited area of a lake, for example, with the intention of changing the water into earth, and he can then walk on the water as if it were solid ground; in fact for him it *is* solid ground, although to others who are present he appears to be walking on water. Similarly, he can extend the image into space in order to be supported in mid air, or if he wants to walk through a wall he can use the space totalization to transform part of the wall into empty space (VM 5.27ff.; 12.87ff.). In each case it is the counterpart image which permits the transformation of ordinary reality into something which appears to violate the natural order.

The question of whether such feats are actually possible is of course not our concern here. Buddhists have traditionally believed them to be possible, and so they form part of the context, part of the whole fabric of putative facts, within which Buddhists have set out to explain the elements of their thought. If we want to know what Buddhists have meant by the term '*prajñapti*', we have to find out what they think a conceptual entity can do. And here we have learned that (as they understand it) a conceptual entity, through the power of meditation, can transform physical reality.

For the counterpart image, the *paṭibhāganimitta*, "a mere form of appearance" which is "only something born of perception", is in fact a concept. The commentary on the *Puggalapaññatti* (PPA 173) identifies both the learning image and the counterpart image as "concepts based on" (*upādāpaññatti*). The "concept based on", it may be recalled, includes the concept of a sentient being (*satta*) or person. So the learning image and the counterpart image, the visual image and the dimensionless object through which physical reality can be altered, are supposed to be conceptual entities of the same type as the *pudgala*.

But the similarity of these images or ideas to the person is by no means obvious. The person is a conceptual entity based on the system of the five aggregates. The learning image and the counterpart image are on the contrary based on a single element or colour. In the one case the basis is composite; in the other, it is simple. Why then are these images not identified with the *tajjāpaññatti*, the "conformable concept", which similarly relates not to a system of any kind, but to the essential nature, the *svabhāva*, of a *dharma*? In fact the examples which the commentary on the *Puggalapaññatti* gives of *dharmas* to which the *tajjāpaññatti* might refer are earth and fire, two of the spheres of totalization (PPA 174).

The dependency of the learning image and counterpart image on the actual appearance of the object which they represent and on the mental cultivation by which they are produced is indicated in the *Puggalapaññatti* commentary by a number of expressions including "*upādāya*" and "*nissāya*" (PPA 173). It might be suggested that that is sufficient reason for identifying them as *upādāpaññatti*. But according to the *Mohavicchedanī*, the *tajjāpaññatti* likewise is dependent (*nissita*) upon the *svabhāvas* to which it is conformable (MoV 246). On that basis it would seem as plausible to associate the learning and counterpart images with the *tajjāpaññatti* as with the *upādāpaññatti*.

A remark made by Buddhaghosa in his discussion of which objects of meditation need to be extended suggests a more likely explanation. He says:

> Consciousness is not to be extended because it has the character of an own-being; for it is impossible to extend something which has the character of an own-being. (VM 3.115)

A *svabhāva* cannot be extended; but the counterpart image in the spheres of totalization has to be extended so that the object of meditation may be "totalized". If the *svabhāva* of earth cannot be extended, the counterpart image in the earth totalization is presumably not strictly an image of that *svabhāva*, since

the counterpart image can be extended. Perhaps that is why the learning and counterpart images, although in some sense representations of the *svabhāvas* to which the *tajjāpaññatti* is conformable, are classified as *upādāpaññatti* rather than as *tajjā*.

That the counterpart image is not an image (or idea) of the *svabhāva* which it represents is a little surprising. It is described as brighter and purer than both the learning image and the physical appearance of which the latter is a reproduction, and it is through this purified idea of the earth, for example, that the properties of earth can be created anywhere in the physical world by the power of meditation. One naturally feels that it is the essence of earth itself to which the meditator is supposed to have gained access; but this "essence of earth itself" would surely be its *svabhāva*.

On the other hand, the counterpart image can be extended, and so even if it has no shape (and Buddhaghosa does not seem to be altogether consistent on this point) it must be in some sense spatial. But even a purified idea of earth, once extended, is surely an image of a mass of earth, and such a mass would be composite, whereas the *tajjāpaññatti*, as a representation of earth as a nature or principle, is surely simple. It is no doubt significant that Buddhaghosa advises the meditator to attend not to the characteristic of earth, its hardness (which of course is also its *svabhāva*), but to its designation or concept (VM 4.29). The starting point for the meditation is earth as we are normally aware of it, understood conceptually as an extended reality, and not as it is in itself.

There is still a good deal that is unclear in all of this. The counterpart image, the timeless and apparently dimensionless idea to which the meditator attains through intensive practice, seems rather more like a nature or principle than the *svabhāva* does, if the *svabhāva* is to be identified with the actually occurring *dharma*. The dismissal of the counterpart image, with all its brilliance and evident importance, as a "mere form of appearance" which is "only something born of perception" seems surprising and perhaps disappointing; and yet one can see that to grant it any greater degree of reality might have very awkward implications for some of the central doctrines of Buddhism, at least as they are understood by the schools which we have been considering in this chapter.

Before returning to the question of the *pudgala*, let us look back briefly over the course which we have followed. We began by distinguishing between the *prajñapti* as designation and the *prajñapti* as conceptual object, the *nāmapaññatti* and *atthapaññatti* as they are called in the Theravāda. We noted that for designations like 'person' the apparent referent is an *atthapaññatti* while the real referent (according to the Theravāda) is the system of interrelated *dharmas* which

we call the five aggregates. But for designations like 'earth'(as the term for one of the four material elements) the real referent is the *dharma* itself, the *svabhāva*; and yet here too, in the case of the *tajjāpaññatti*, there is an *atthapaññatti*, a conceptual object, as referent in addition to the *svabhāva* which is the real referent. And this *atthapaññatti* must, we concluded, be simple as the *svabhāva* it corresponds to is simple.

The function of this conceptual object seems to be to represent actual occurrences of the *dharma* when no such occurrences are directly present. A passage from a Sarvāstivādin or Sautrāntika source identifies a kind of concept, a "concept of manifestation", by which the ultimately real, after it has been known directly in meditation, can be represented as a basis for a continuing knowledge which, although indirect and conventional, may still be considered knowledge of the real. This "concept of manifestation" seems to be similar to the *tajjāpaññatti*.

We then considered *saṃjñā* as the specific activity of the mind by which the absent can be represented and recognized. *Saṃjñā* is defined by the Sautrāntikas as "taking up a sign"; by the Pudgalavādins, as something like "taking up various appearances". In both cases what is "taken up" seems to be understood as a kind of likeness or image, and that impression is confirmed by Xuánzàng's use of '*xiàng*', "image", as an equivalent for '*nimitta*', "sign" or "image", in his translation of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. We noted also that the term '*saṃjñā*' can be used for the mental image itself as well as for the activity by which it is formed or "taken up".

We turned then to the "spheres of totalization", meditations in which a *saṃjñā* or *nimitta* is produced and extended so that it becomes all-pervasive. In each case the object of meditation is something simple, and the image or idea which represents it is likewise simple; in fact in the Theravāda the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* or "counterpart image" is of the utmost purity and brilliance. This purified idea of the object of meditation is the means by which the laws of the physical world can apparently be altered through the power of the meditation. But the counterpart image, although seeming to be pre-eminently real, is in fact a concept and is identified as a "concept based on", an *upādāpaññatti*. It is thus supposed to be of the same type as the concept of the person.

We have seen, then, that a *prajñapti* as object need not be a system or collection of real *dharmas* grouped together under a single term; it may be a mental image or idea which is relatively simple in itself and which represents something simple, a single *dharma* or a number of *dharmas* of a single type. But any *prajñapti*, simple or complex, which functions as the immediate referent of a term whose real referent is not directly present will be such an image, and will

serve to mediate knowledge of what can no longer be known directly. As the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* says (AAS 39), "Although ultimately non-existent, [*atthapaññattis*] become objects for occurrences of thought as a kind of shadow of the thing (*attha*)." In itself such a "shadow" is evidently a mental phenomenon and is surely real. It is conceptual in not being what it purports to be; it functions, after all, by standing for what is no longer actually present. There is a limited sense, then, in which the *atthapaññatti*, as an image or idea, might be regarded as both conceptual and real.

The counterpart image seems to be a special case. It is an image or idea which can hardly be a real mental phenomenon, since it is supposed to be free of the three characteristics of created *dharmas*. On the other hand, it is clearly experiential, and it has power, or is at least the means by which power can be focussed. As a conceptual entity which is apparently not constituted either by anything extra-mental or by any mental phenomenon, which is transcendent and yet powerful in the world, its nature remains at least as mysterious as that of the *pudgala*.

Chapter 10

The *Pudgala* as Image

LET us consider again the evidence which initially suggested that the person or self as a conceptual entity is simply the five aggregates taken together as a single being. First, there is the statement ascribed to the Vātsīputrīya by Vasubandhu in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*: "The person is conceived by appropriating the present aggregates appropriated as internal" (AKB 9; DS ed. 1192.7f.). Secondly, there is the very similar statement in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, Kumārabuddhi's version of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*: "The living being is conceived by appropriating as a living being the aggregates, elements and spheres which are present and appropriated as internal" (T1505, 10a5–7). But this is offered only as an explanation of "conception according to appropriation". Finally, there is the statement ascribed to the Vātsīputrīya by Harivarman in the *Tattvasiddhi*: "Now we say that it is the combination of the five aggregates that is called the self, and so we are not at fault" (T1646, 259c25).

On the face of it, these passages clearly indicate that the person is to be understood as simply the five aggregates (and the elements and spheres) taken together as a single being. But on closer examination their evidence turns out to be inconclusive. The first two merely state that the concept of the person is based on the aggregates and so on, not that the person itself is a conceptual entity consisting of the aggregates. In the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, moreover, the person is not supposed to be either conceptual or substantial; and in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, although it may have been assumed to be conceptual, the statement in question is only one of the three explanations of how it may be conceived, and so can hardly be taken as the sole definition of what the person is in itself.

The third passage, however, seems unambiguous, at least according to my translation of it: "It is the combination of the five aggregates that is called the self." The Chinese text (it may be recalled that the original Sanskrit has been lost) seems no less clear: "五陰和合名之為我 *wǔ yīn héhé míng zhī wéi wǒ*." Sastri has translated this very much as I have: "*pañcaskandhasamavāyātmeti*" (Sastri, 1975: 91). The meaning of the Chinese is not in doubt. But how accurately does the Chinese reflect the lost original?

Since the original is lost, that might seem impossible to determine. But the translator of the *Tattvasiddhi* was Kumārajīva, and there is another philosophical

work translated by Kumārajīva for which we have the Sanskrit original: Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Kumārajīva translated it in 409 CE together with an early commentary under the title of "中論 *Zhōng lùn*". In the *Zhōng lùn* we find "陰合有如來 *yīn hé yǒu rúlái*" (T1564, 30a5): "[If] the Tathāgata exists [depending on] the combination of the aggregates...." The corresponding Sanskrit is "*buddhaḥ skandhān upādāya yadi*..." (MMK 22.2ab): "If the Buddha [exists] on the basis of the aggregates...." Evidently Kumārajīva has rendered "*skandhān upādāya*" ("on the basis of the aggregates") as "陰合 *yīn hé*" ("[depending on] the combination of the aggregates"). In the commentary we find the paraphrase: "若如來五陰和合故有 *ruò rúlái wǔ yīn héhé gù yǒu*..." (T1564, 30a7): "If the Tathāgata exists on account of the combination of the five aggregates...." Here we have the same expression as in the *Tattvasiddhi*: "五陰和合 *wǔ yīn héhé* ". The Sanskrit text of the commentary has not survived, but we have a closely related commentary, the *Akutobhaya*, in a Tibetan translation. The wording there, "*phuṅ po la brten nas*" (P5229, 40b8),[1] makes it clear that its original repeated "*skandhān upādāya*" from the verse; the interpretation of the Tibetan is confirmed by Candrakīrti's commentary, the *Prasannapadā*, and its Tibetan translation (PPMV 436.7; De Jong, 1949: 146). It is very likely, then, that the Sanskrit original of the *Zhōng lùn* commentary also had "*skandhān upādāya*" (or perhaps "*pañcaskandhān upādāya*").

If Kumārajīva translated "*skandhān upādāya*" as "五陰和合故有 *wǔ yīn héhé gù yǒu*" in the *Zhōng lùn*, it is entirely possible that "五陰和合 *wǔ yīn héhé*" in his translation of the *Tattvasiddhi* likewise represents "*skandhān upādāya*". The Sanskrit for the whole sentence would then have been something like "*skandhān upādāyātmā prajñapyate*", that is, "The self is conceived (or designated) on the basis of the aggregates." Kumārajīva evidently took this to mean that it is the combination of the five aggregates that we are really talking about when we speak of the self, and his translation is correct (although not literal) according to that understanding. But the sentence does not have to be interpreted in this way; like the statements in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, it says only that the concept of the self is based on the aggregates, not that the self itself is no more than the aggregates so conceived.

Thus the evidence afforded by all three passages is inconclusive: they permit the interpretation that the *pudgala* is simply the aggregates taken together, but

1 In full, the Tibetan is "*gal te de bźin gśegs pa phuṅ po la brten nas gdags par 'dod na*...(If it is maintained that the Tathāgata is conceived on the basis of the aggregates...)". The *Zhōng lùn* thus has "有 *yǒu* (exists)" where the *Akutobhaya* has "*gdags pa* (is conceived)". The original texts may have differed, but I suspect that Kumārajīva translated somewhat freely. Buddhapālita, Bhavya and Candrakīrti all follow the *Akutobhaya* more or less closely in their commentaries on this verse.

they do not require it. And with that interpretation there are, as we have seen, a number of difficulties. In the first place, the analogies of fuel and fire and of a tree and its shadow seem hardly appropriate if the *pudgala* is to be understood as actually constituted by the aggregates: the logs that the fire burns are not the constituents of the fire. In the next place, the functioning of karma seems to be incomprehensible (in the view of the Pudgalavādins) if a sentient being is no more than a system of *dharmas*: why should the action of a sentient being upon other sentient beings lead to rebirth and suffering when the same action of a sentient being on some other kind of system of *dharmas* has no such consequences? Thirdly, the person conceived according to cessation, although "true and ultimate", is obviously not a conceptual entity consisting of the aggregates (or any other constituents) taken as a whole, since in Parinirvana all *dharmas* by which the person might be identified have passed away. Fourthly, if the person is conceptual in the sense of being constituted by the relationships among certain *dharmas*, then the person conceived according to the basis, the person conceived according to transition and the person conceived according to cessation ought to be three different persons, since they are constituted by different *dharmas* differently related. But if they are different, the continuity of the person's identity is lost: one person passes to a new life, but another person lives it; the Buddha is annihilated at death, and someone else attains Parinirvana. Finally, if it is only the concept according to the basis that is supposed to constitute the person by comprehending its constituent *dharmas* as a whole, the other two kinds of concept merely representing it in its transition or cessation, then just as the person clearly exists as long as its constituent *dharmas* exist, so also it should be simply non-existent when it has attained Parinirvana and the *dharmas* of the five aggregates have passed away. But in fact the person is said to be neither existent nor non-existent in Parinirvana.

As far as I can see, these difficulties are insuperable, and our interpretation, plausible as it seemed, has to be abandoned. But that interpretation, according to which the *pudgala* is a conceptual whole which is not strictly reducible to its parts, had at least the merit of being intelligible. What other interpretation can we offer that accords better with the facts and is also intelligible?

It is conceivable, of course, that the interpretation which we have just abandoned *is* the only one which is intelligible, and that it is intelligible because it is essentially the orthodox Buddhist view of the self, although with an unorthodox insistence on the truth and ultimacy of an entity admitted to be insubstantial. If the Pudgalavādins' theory of the *pudgala* was something different from that, as now seems to be the case, it may *not* have been intelligible

in any strict sense of the term: they may have believed the *pudgala* to be fundamentally mysterious, and their theory may have been accordingly paradoxical or (if one prefers) incoherent. Nevertheless, it was a theory which they undertook to explain and which they evidently expected to be understood. Presumably they thought the nature of the self would be recognized when properly indicated, even though it could not be defined except by its indefiniteness.

But what did they understand the self to be, if not a whole formed by the *dharmas* of the five aggregates? Even if the *pudgala* was an entity whose nature was unique and to be comprehended only by an intuitive realization, they must when they spoke of it, even without that realization, have had some notion of what they were talking about; they must surely have had in mind some other kind of entity to which it bore at least an obscure resemblance. Fire was no doubt an entity of this kind; so also, perhaps, was the concept which the *pudgala* was supposed to be.

The Pudgalavādins distinguished five categories of the knowable: the past, the future and the present, the uncreated, and the inexpressible ; the inexpressible is of course the *pudgala*. But if the *pudgala* was supposed to be a unique category of the knowable, it may not have been a concept in the same sense as other conceptual entities. (There is nothing in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*'s discussion of "ignorance of the inexpressible" to suggest that anything other than the *pudgala* was included in the inexpressible.) It may rather have been something which could be *thought* of as a concept because of a limited similarity to conceptual entities, just as it could be compared to fire because of an obviously limited similarity to that. And if the *pudgala* was thought of as conceptual in this rather figurative sense, it is easier to understand how the Pudgalavādins could later have thought of it as substantial (*dravya*) instead, though also in only a figurative sense.

But what kind of concept could they have had in mind when they thought of the *pudgala*? Obviously it would be an *atthapaññatti*, a *prajñapti* as conceptual object. Since the *pudgala* was not merely the totality of its supporting aggregates but was in some sense simple, it would have an affinity with the Theravādins' *tajjāpaññatti* by which a *dharma* is comprehended even when the *dharma* itself is not directly present. But the Theravādins classified the concept of the person as an *upādāpaññatti*, understanding this to be the aggregates taken together. The Pudgalavādins may likewise have regarded the *pudgala* as an *upādāpaññatti* (or *upādāyaprajñapti*), since one of the three ways of conceiving the *pudgala* was according to its basis; and of course they understood the *pudgala* to be dependent

(*upādāya*) on its aggregates as a fire on its fuel. But as that analogy indicated, an *upādāyaprajñapti* need not be a whole dependent on its parts; the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* or "counterpart image", which according to the Theravādins is a kind of dimensionless image produced in meditation, is also classified as an *upādāpaññatti*.

Both the *tajjāpaññatti* and the *paṭibhāganimitta* are images. Can the Pudgalavādins have thought of the *pudgala* as something like an image?

On the face of it, this seems unlikely. A mental image such as the *tajjāpaññatti* or the *paṭibhāganimitta*, though similar to the *pudgala* in being simple and irreducible, is something which (normally, at least) exists only for the person who produces it. The *pudgala*, on the contrary, is supposed to be a conceptual entity which anyone can observe; its existence is supposed to be public. And the *pudgala* is supposed to be the author of its deeds and the recipient of their results; it is hard to see how it can perform real actions and suffer real consequences if it exists only in the mind of another person. (And in whose mind would *that* person exist?)

If the *pudgala* is to be thought of as like an image, it must be an image that exists publicly, one which anyone can observe. This cannot be a mental image, at least in any ordinary sense. But there is one kind of image which is not a physical likeness, like a statue, and which is nevertheless publicly observable: the image in a mirror.

Images in mirrors are rather uncanny presences, comprehensible to us now, with our understanding of the behaviour of light, but surely quite mystifying without that understanding. (Even now they have the fascination of an illusion persisting after its discovery, like a magic trick still powerful after its secret has been revealed.) When we look into a mirror, we see ourselves, not at the surface of the mirror, but beyond it, in a space somehow different from what our hand enters when we reach behind it. And what we see there can be seen by others; it is not a private world of dream or imagination, but a counterpart of our own world visible to anyone who stands within the range of the reflected light. The images in the mirror are as public as any of the things we see around us, of which, after all, they are the reflection.

To associate the *pudgala* with such an image would not have been difficult. In the *Saṃyuttanikāya*, Puṇṇa Mantāniputta is remembered as saying:

> Just as a woman or a man, friend Ānanda, or a youth fond of ornaments looking at the image of his face in a mirror that is clean and immaculate, or in a bowl of clear water, would see it on the basis (*upādāya*) of that and

> not independently of it, even so, friend Ānanda, on the basis of physical form is there [the sense of] "I am", and not independently of it. [And so also] on the basis of feeling, perception, mental forces or consciousness is there [the sense of] "I am", and not independently of it. (S iii 105)

He does not say, of course, that the *person* is like the image in the mirror, but rather the impression or belief that the person exists. But this would no doubt have been interpreted as meaning that the person itself appears, like an image, on the basis of the five aggregates, and with it, of course, the belief in its existence.

We find similar comparisons in the literature of the Mahāyāna. The *Mahāvijñānaprakāśanasūtra* (大顯識經 *Dà xiǎn shì jīng*) in the *Ratnakūṭa* collection compares the rebirth of consciousness in a body to the reflection of a person's face in a mirror (T347, 181b13–23).[2] The *Śālistambasūtra* likewise compares rebirth to the reflection of a face in a mirror and of the moon in a vessel of water (Vaidya ed. 105).[3] And Nāgārjuna gives a paraphrase of the passage that we have noted in the *Saṃyuttanikāya* in his philosophical poem *Ratnāvalī* (1.31–33).[4] All these are sufficient to indicate that such comparisons were not unusual in at least some parts of the Buddhist tradition; they do not, however, show that this was how the Pudgalavādins thought of the person.

But there is one passage which clearly connects the simile of the mirror image with the Pudgalavāda. In his commentary on the twenty-second chapter, the "Tathāgataparīkṣā", of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, Candrakīrti introduces the Pudgalavādins as imaginary opponents:

> At this point some say, "We do not say that the Tathāgata is the same as the aggregates, since the faults as you have stated them would follow, nor that he is separate from the aggregates. Nor do we describe the pure aggregates as in the Tathāgata as a clump of trees is in the Himalaya, nor him as in the aggregates as a lion is in a clump of trees. Nor do we describe him as possessing the aggregates as a world ruler (*cakravartin*) possesses his qualities, since we do not accept that he is identical with them or different from them. But we establish the Tathāgata on the basis (*upādāya*) of the pure aggregates as inexpressible (*avācya*) either as identical or as different, and so on.

(And here we recognize the classic definition of the Pudgalavādin position.)

2 Translated in Chang, 1983: 229.
3 Cited in PPMV 568.4–13; tr. May, 1959: 274f.
4 Translated in Tucci, 1934: 315, and in Hopkins and Lati Rimpoche, 1975: 21.

So your method does not refute us."

Candrakīrti then gives Nāgārjuna's verse (MMK 22.2) as a response, and proceeds with his commentary:

> If the Buddha, the Fortunate One, is conceived (*prajñapyate*) on the basis of the pure aggregates as inexpressible as either identical or different, then it clearly follows that he does not exist through his own-being (*svabhāvatas*), since like a reflected image (*pratibimba*) he is conceived on the basis [of something else]. Now if he does not exist through his own-being, by a nature of his own, how will he exist through other-being, on the basis of the aggregates, when he is non-existent through his own-being? For it is impossible for the non-existent son of a barren woman to be dependent on other-being. But if they say, "Perhaps just as a reflected image, though not existing through its own-being, exists depending on the other-being of a face, a mirror and so on, so also the Tathāgata, non-existent through his own-being, will exist through other-being, on the basis of the five pure aggregates," even so,

—and here Candrakīrti gives Nāgārjuna's next verse (MMK 22.3) before proceeding—

> if it is held that the Tathāgata, like a reflected image, is dependent on other-being, then in that case it is reasonable that just like a reflected image the Tathāgata should have no self, whereas for him to exist through his own-being would be inconsistent. The term 'self' is a synonym for the term 'own-being'.... (PPMV 435.9–437.5)

There can be no doubt that the opponents here are Pudgalavādins: they hold that the Tathāgata is conceived on the basis of the aggregates, and is inexpressible as either the same as the aggregates or different from them. And they evidently hold that he exists not merely conventionally but as something ultimate; otherwise they would have no disagreement (on this point at least) with Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. It is Candrakīrti who introduces the simile of the reflected image, but the Pudgalavādins, rather surprisingly on the face of it, are willing to accept it.

That they *are* willing to accept it is because they do not agree that dependence entails non-existence. To be like a reflected image is not, they feel, to be like "the non-existent son of a barren woman". Accordingly, a dependent entity such as the Tathāgata is not merely conventional, and is certainly not purely fictitious. They define the Tathāgata, like any *pudgala*, as dependent on the aggregates (in this case, the pure aggregates of a Buddha), and clearly regard his existence, even though dependent, as an ultimate fact.

To a limited extent, their position is similar to that of the Sarvāstivādins and other non-Pudgalavādin schools which affirm the reality of the *saṃskṛta-dharmas*. These schools do not, of course, accept the reality of the *pudgala*, but they see no contradiction in affirming the ultimate existence of the *dharmas* of the five aggregates while acknowledging that they are dependently arisen. Such *dharmas*, they insist, are not composite, not reducible to constituents of any kind. Each is identical with itself and different from everything else, and so has its own being (*svabhāva*) even though it arises through the occurrence of other *dharmas* in the causal chain. Its existence can accordingly be affirmed as "true and ultimate".

The Pudgalavādins hold that the *pudgala* is also "true and ultimate" although dependent on the five aggregates. But they are not represented here as claiming that the *pudgala* has its own being; it exists rather through "other-being", as the reflected image exists through the face and the mirror. It is not defined, after all, as something distinct and self-identical, but as indeterminate, neither the same as the five aggregates nor different from them. In their view, to be "true and ultimate" has nothing to do with having *svabhāva*.

The simile of the reflected image would be acceptable to the Pudgalavādins for other reasons as well, some of which we have already noted. In the first place, there is canonical authority for it in the *Saṃyuttanikāya*. That the point of the passage seems to be the illusoriness of the self would not be a problem for them; as we have seen, the Pudgalavādins interpret "wrong view of the self" not as belief that the self is real but as belief that the self is determinate, either identical with the aggregates or distinct from them. They would accordingly understand the passage to be insisting on the *dependence* of the self on the aggregates.

Then there is the fact that the image in a mirror is publicly observable; it is not merely the product of a single person's imagination or interpretation. Like the *pudgala*, it can be seen by anyone who happens to be there to see it.

Furthermore, it differs from a clay image, for example, in not being reducible to what it depends on. A terracotta image of an ox is simply clay in the shape of an ox; the ox is precisely where the clay is, and apart from its resemblance to a

real ox it is nothing but the clay itself. But the image of one's face in a mirror is not made of the mirror as the ox is made of clay. It is not the shape of the mirror, and it is not seen where the mirror is, but rather beyond the mirror, as though appearing through it. Without the mirror there is no image, but the image is not reducible to the mirror.

Finally, Candrakīrti says that "like a reflected image, [the Tathāgata] is conceived on the basis [of something else]". The reflected image is not something substantial (*dravya*)—it has no *svabhāva*—but a conceptual entity, an *atthapaññatti*, and specifically, an *upādāpaññatti* (or *upādāyaprajñapti*, "concept based on"). It is thus the same kind of conceptual entity as the *paṭibhāganimitta* and the *pudgala*. We should note, however, that not all Buddhists would agree that the image in a mirror is a conceptual entity. The *Mahāvibhāṣā* actually says that it is real, on the grounds that it is dependently arisen (T1545, 390c). Yaśomitra, commenting on the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (3.11cd; DS ed. 406.27–29),[5] explains it as "erroneous consciousness" (*bhrāntaṃ vijñānam*), and consciousness, whether erroneous or not, is no doubt to be understood as real. But Pŭguāng, commenting on the same passage, says the image is "假 *jiă*", not "實 *shí*" (T1821, 157b1f., 11ff.); and '假 *jiă*' contrasted with '實 *shí*' in this way must be equivalent to '*prajñaptisat*' (and '實 *shí*' to '*dravyasat*'). In fact, if the image is not *dravyasat*, it is hard to see what else it can be except a *prajñapti*. (If one argued that the image was something that was really neither *dravya* nor *prajñapti*, it would then resemble the *pudgala* as explained by the Vātsīputrīya in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*.)[6]

To this extent, then, the *pudgala* is comparable to a reflected image. But the *pudgala* is conscious and is supposed to be the author of its deeds and the enjoyer of their results. Can anything similar be said about the image in a mirror? We do not normally ascribe consciousness to such an image: it is the person standing before the mirror who is conscious, not the image of the person. And the only actions performed by the image are the reflections of those performed by the person; the image has no power to initiate any action of its own. It is on this kind of basis, after all, that we distinguish between the person and the reflected image.

There is one kind of image in a mirror, however, that seems to have been thought of as having its own consciousness and volition. The *Brahmajālasutta* refers to a practice called *ādāsapañha* or mirror-questioning (D i 11). The commentary explains this as "asking questions of a god who has been made to come down into a mirror" (DA i 97). How this was understood is not altogether clear: was the god thought of as somehow reflected in the mirror, or as directly

[5] Wogihara ed. 268.

[6] See above, p. 86f.

perceived? The phrasing of the commentary suggests the latter. But then in what sense could we call this an image? In the sense, no doubt, that the god was to be seen only in the mirror; and not upon the mirror's surface, but within it, in the space apparently behind its surface.

But we should bear in mind in any case that the *pudgala* was supposed to be unique. If the Pudgalavādins thought of it as an image, they did so not because it was an image, but because its nature resembled that of an image in certain respects. That in other respects it was unlike an image was of course to be expected. For if they were to think and speak of the *pudgala* at all, it would have to be in terms of things that only partially resembled it; the nature of the *pudgala* itself would not coincide exactly with that of anything else, and to that extent would be inexpressible.

The fact is, however, that in the Pudgalavādin texts that have come down to us, the nature of the self is not explained by the analogy of a reflected image. It is true that the analogy appears in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* (T1649, 471a23f.), but it is offered by an opponent who is arguing against the Pudgalavādin (and Sarvāstivādin) doctrine of an intermediate existence (中間有 *zhōngjiān yǒu*, *antarābhava*) between death and rebirth: just as the image of one's face appears in a well without having travelled to it, so rebirth may be possible without any period of transition. The reflected image is mentioned also in the *Tridharma-khaṇḍaka*, but there it is the *aggregates* (or in Kumārabuddhi's version, the *āyatanas* or spheres) that are compared to a reflected image (and to an illusion, a mirage and an echo) as part of the explanation of *satkāyadṛṣṭi*, the wrong views of individuality (T1505, 10b5; T1506, 24b12). It would seem that even if the comparison of the *pudgala* to a reflected image was acceptable to the Pudgalavādins, as Candrakīrti indicates, it was not a comparison which they normally made.

Chapter 11

The *Pudgala* as Fire

THE comparison which they did make was to fire. As we have already seen, the analogy with fire is an important part of the arguments ascribed to the Pudgalavādins in the *Tattvasiddhi* and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, and it appears briefly in one of the other critiques of the Pudgalavāda, in Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (18. 95). But we find it also in Pudgalavādin texts, in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, and in the Sāṃmitīya material in the *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya*. These are not the extended discussions of the *Tattvasiddhi* and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*; they are only brief references, which are sufficient, however, to confirm that this was an analogy which the Pudgalavādins actually used.

The references are of two kinds. Those in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* use fire to explain the *upādāyaprajñaptapudgala*, the person conceived on the basis (of the aggregates). One of these we have seen already:

> As the Buddha explained when he spoke to Pāpaya, "Whatever the formations on whose basis it is expressed, from those its name is established." This is called *upādāyaprajñapti*, as in the example of fire. (T1649, 466b4–6)

What is probably the same passage from the sutras in a slightly different translation is cited later as part of an opponent's objection to the doctrine that the *pudgala* transmigrates from one existence to another:

> The Buddha furthermore explained, "Whatever the formations upon which it depends, from those it receives its name, as a fire receives its name on the basis of its fuel." (T1649, 467a23f.)

For the Pudgalavādins, of course, there is no inconsistency in saying that the *pudgala* is named (or conceived) on the basis of the aggregates, and yet passes on to a new set of aggregates (and a new name) when the old are destroyed in death.

The other references, two of them in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* and the third in the *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya*, are to the extinction of a fire (or a lamp). One of

the two in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* is part of an explanation of Parinirvana as "Nirvana without residue":

> "Without residue": if the aggregates of appropriation have been abandoned with no further acquisition of individuality [i.e. rebirth], as in the extinguishing of a lamp, this Nirvana is "without residue". (T1505, 10a1f.; T1506, 24a27f.)

The passage in the *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya* is similar:

> Therefore, with the non-existence of all destinies [for the one who has attained Parinirvana], descriptions as this or another have ceased on account of this freedom. To illustrate, the basis for all descriptions of a fire as what consumes (*dāhaka*) and so on is the fuel; so it is for all descriptions of a *pudgala* which has its support (or appropriation: *upādāna*), but not in the absence of support. Moreover, it is said,
>
> Without exception the basis for the describable is having a destiny;
> since [the Tathāgata after death] has no destiny, he has ceased, like a fire whose fuel is consumed. (P5865, 71d1–3)

The other passage in the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* is an explanation of intermediate Parinirvana, attaining Parinirvana midway (*antarāparinirvṛti*), which the Pudgalavādins (and the Sarvāstivādins) understood to be a final passing away during the transition from one life to another, in the "intermediate existence" (*antarābhava*), and of rebirth Parinirvana, attaining Parinirvana immediately upon rebirth (*utpannaparinirvṛti*).[1]

> "Intermediate Parinirvana": when this life has ended and the next has not yet arisen, one attains enlightenment (得道 *dé dào*) and Parinirvana midway; as a spark flies out and is extinguished before it has fallen, so in this case. "Rebirth Parinirvana": as a spark flies out, falls to the ground and is immediately extinguished, so when first reborn one directly attains enlightenment and Parinirvana. (T1505, 6a21–24; T1506, 20c4–7)

What are the advantages of comparing the *pudgala* to a fire? In the first place, there is abundant canonical authority for such a comparison. The first two

[1] See AK 6.37a; DS ed. 948.5f.

passages we have noted are evidently from a sutra (or perhaps, as Venkataramanan suggests, from a *jātaka*), and the passage on intermediate Parinirvana and rebirth Parinirvana is based on the *Sattapurisagatisutta* in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (A iv 70). The Pudgalavādins would no doubt have had other passages in mind as well, in particular the "Upasīvamāṇavapucchā" in the *Suttanipāta* (1069–1076), the *Aggivacchagottasutta* in the *Majjhimanikāya* (M i 483–489), and the *Kutūhalasālāsutta* (which is also addressed to Vacchagotta) in the *Saṃyuttanikāya* (S iv 398–400). Whatever its interpretation, there could be no disputing the fact that the Buddha himself had compared the person to a fire and Parinirvana to the extinction of the fire when its fuel is exhausted. The terminology which he used made the comparison particularly apt: the fuel of the fire is its *upādāna* (support or appropriation) and when extinguished the fire is *nibbuta*, has attained its *nibbāna*. The person is thus seen as a kind of process of combustion, passing on at death from the fuel it has consumed and appropriating new fuel for its next life, until finally it learns to end its appropriation and is extinguished, attaining cessation or Nirvana.

Other schools would of course acknowledge that this analogy had the authority of the Buddha, but they did not see it as supporting the position of the Pudgalavāda. As far as they were concerned, the fire that passes from one heap of fuel to another is itself nothing real, but a merely conceptual entity (like the self which it represents) and so cannot be considered "true and ultimate". The fire that *is* real is a momentary *dharma* causally linked to the *dharmas* preceding and following it. As Harivarman and Vasubandhu pointed out, that fire is identical with heat (its *svabhāva*) and is different from everything else; it has thus a determinate relationship with its fuel, and so cannot be analogous to the self, which is neither the same as the aggregates nor different from them.

Why then did the Pudgalavādins choose an analogy to illuminate their doctrine of the *pudgala* which their opponents were happy to use in support of their own position? That the analogy was authorized by the Buddha was of no significance if it could not help to establish the position of the Pudgalavāda. Were the Pudgalavādins simply confused about the nature of fire? Did they fail to anticipate the arguments which Harivarman and Vasubandhu brought against them? We have to recall again that the Pudgalavādins seem not to have shared the ontological assumptions of such schools as the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda. They did not restrict the "true and ultimate" to the determinate, to things which are clearly themselves and nothing else; and they identified "conventional" truth not with the conceptual but with the loose or figurative discourse of practical affairs. They could thus regard the continuum of fire passing from one heap of

fuel to another as no less "true and ultimate" than the *dharmas* which according to their opponents were all that properly existed.

That does not mean that they thought of fire as having the same nature as the *pudgala*. As with the reflected image, we are dealing here with a comparison which is meant to suggest something of the character of an entity which in reality is unique. But the character of fire as something persistent, mobile and supremely fluid, showing none of the discontinuity by which it might be analyzed into momentary elements, publicly observable, though not as a separate, isolated *dharma*, not reducible to its fuel and yet impossible to identify without it, and associated moreover with warmth, vitality and the light of consciousness, such a character might well seem to approximate the more intimate and mysterious character of the self.

But there was another advantage as well as that of showing an entity which, like the *pudgala*, can pass on from support to support, from *upādāna* to *upādāna*, without loss of identity. Three of the five passages we have noted relate to Parinirvana. The Buddha seems to have used the analogy of fire in particular to clarify the status of the Tathāgata after death, and the analogy was no doubt important to the Pudgalavādins for the same reason. But what are we to understand from this analogy? How did the Pudgalavādins conceive of the *pudgala* in Parinirvana?

Let us recall what we have already been able to learn from our sources. According to the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, one of the three kinds of *pudgala* is the *nirodhaprajñaptapudgala*, the person conceived according to cessation (T1649, 466b2; T1505, 10a4; T1506, 24b1). We are told that because there is the person conceived according to cessation, the *pudgala* cannot be said to be permanent (T1505, 10a28; T1506, 24b6; cf. also T1649, 466a4ff.). On the other hand, Parinirvana is not mere non-existence, for that is where one attains the "unshakeable happiness" (T1649, 466c21ff.), and in that regard the non-permanence of the *pudgala* is to be explained as merely the impermanence of the aggregates from which it is non-different (T1649, 466a9ff.). In the *Kathāvatthu*, the Pudgalavādin is represented as going so far as to say that the *pudgala* which has attained Parinirvana "exists in the Goal", that is, in Nirvana (KV 1.1.228).

To all this we may add the evidence of another passage from Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*, this time from the twenty-fifth chapter, the "Critique of Nirvana". Having explained what Nirvana is supposed to be according to such schools as the Sarvāstivāda, Candrakīrti now goes on to explain it according to the Pudgalavāda:

> But for those for whom the *pudgala* transmigrates, that state of coming and going [i.e. Samsara] on the basis of its various supports (*upādāna*) of a *pudgala* which is indefinable as permanent or impermanent proceeds dependently (*upādāya*); just that [state of coming and going of the *pudgala*] which proceeded according to its dependence, now that it is independent and no longer proceeding, is described as Nirvana. (PPMV 529.10–530.2)

Stcherbatsky (1927: 197, n. 17) interprets this as saying that it is the *pudgala* itself that is called Nirvana when it is no longer proceeding dependently. This does not seem to be possible grammatically, but it may not be very different from what Candrakīrti's statement amounts to in any case. He says that it is the state of coming and going (Samsara) which is called Nirvana when it no longer proceeds. But the state is a state of the *pudgala*—it is the *pudgala*, after all, which comes and goes—and the state's no longer proceeding is equivalent to its disappearance. The non-proceeding of the coming and going of the *pudgala* is surely not a new state of the original state of coming and going—a state of a state—but a new state of the *pudgala*, one in which it no longer comes and goes.

Other Buddhists might argue that this new state of the *pudgala* is simply its non-existence, for without the aggregates upon which the concept of the *pudgala* is based, there is no longer a *pudgala* even in the conventional sense in which there was before. But for the Pudgalavādins the *pudgala* (which even if conceptual is "true and ultimate") is not annihilated in Parinirvana, though it cannot be said either that it continues to exist. The *pudgala* may not be precisely the same as Nirvana, but Nirvana is what the *pudgala* in some sense possesses when its coming and going has ceased, and since the *pudgala* cannot strictly be said to exist at this point, there is only (the *pudgala*'s) Nirvana; and we might guess further that it is because its Nirvana exists (or at least is not non-existent)[2] that the *pudgala* cannot be said to be non-existent. (We have already noted that the *pudgala* and Nirvana should be neither the same nor different.)[3]

Moreover, everyone agrees that Nirvana is uncreated. That means that it cannot properly be said to begin when the coming and going ceases; it must already have existed, and not precisely as the coming and going itself, since that ceases, but either as the real nature of the coming and going (which is what the

2 According to Bhavya (P5256, 68c6; P5640, 255c3), the Vātsīputrīyas held that Nirvana cannot be said either to exist or not to exist. Elsewhere he says that they regarded Nirvana as both existence and non-existence (P5256, 38a5f.; Iida, 1980, 196). See above, p. 70.

3 See above, p. 110.

Mādhyamikas themselves affirm) or else as that which (at least in appearance) comes and goes, that to which the state of coming and going belongs; and that, of course, is the *pudgala*. Candrakīrti does not in fact say that the *pudgala* becomes (or is revealed as) Nirvana, but such a statement, even if actually a misinterpretation of the text, might serve to approximate what the Pudgalavādins believed to be the real state of affairs.

How can the analogy of fire help us to make sense of this? Let us return to two of the canonical passages which we have already noted. The first is from the *Aggivacchagottasutta*:

> Now what do you think, Vaccha? If a fire were burning before you, would you know that that fire was burning before you ?
>
> If a fire were burning before me, Gotama, I should know that that fire was burning before me.
>
> But if someone were to ask you, Vaccha, "For what reason does this fire burn that is burning before you?" how would you reply, Vaccha, when questioned thus?
>
> If someone were to ask me, Gotama, "For what reason does this fire burn that is burning before you?" I would reply, Gotama, when questioned thus, "This fire that is burning before me burns because of its fuel of grass and sticks."
>
> If the fire that was before you, Vaccha, were to be extinguished, would you know that that fire that was before you had been extinguished?
>
> If the fire that was before me were to be extinguished, Gotama, I should know that that fire that was before me had been extinguished.
>
> But if someone were to ask you, Vaccha, "In which direction has it gone from here, that fire which was before you and has been extinguished: to the east, west, north or south?" how would you reply, Vaccha, when questioned thus?
>
> It does not apply, Gotama. For that fire burned because of its fuel of grass and sticks, and as that has been consumed and no more has been given to it, it has no sustenance and so it is said to be extinguished.
>
> Even so, Vaccha, that physical form by which one identifying the Tathāgata might identify him, that physical form has been done away with by the Tathāgata, its roots cut up, made like an uprooted palm tree, made unable to become, not liable to arise in the future. Freed from definition according to physical form is the Tathāgata, Vaccha, deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean. 'Arises' does not apply,

'does not arise' does not apply, 'both arises and does not arise' does not apply, 'neither arises nor does not arise' does not apply. [And so likewise for feeling, perception, mental forces and consciousness.] (M i 487f.)

The Buddha seems to say here that the fire is simply non-existent once it has gone out for lack of fuel, and so it makes no sense to ask in what direction it has gone; something that has ceased to exist does not go anywhere. But when he comes to apply this to the Tathāgata after death, he does *not* say that because the Tathāgata no longer exists it makes no sense to ask where he has gone. He says rather that the Tathāgata "is deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean", and that he cannot be said to arise, not to arise, both or neither. The analogy seems to fail. The fire that has gone out is simply non-existent, whereas the Tathāgata after his death cannot be said to exist (to arise, after all, is to begin to exist), not to exist, both or neither.[4] Or is there some sense in which we could say that the fire after it has gone out "is deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean"? Surely the fire, once it is extinguished, simply does not arise. We would not say that 'arises' does not apply, 'does not arise' does not apply, and so on.

The other passage is from the "Upasīvamāṇavapucchā" in the *Suttanipāta*:

> As a flame blown out by the force of the wind, Upasīva, said the Fortunate One, flees to its setting, beyond definition, so does the sage freed from his mental body flee to his setting, beyond definition.
>
> One who has gone to his setting, does he not exist, or is he unimpaired, being eternal? Explain this well to me, Sage, for so is this doctrine known to you.
>
> There is no measure of one who has gone to his setting, Upasīva, said the Fortunate One. Nothing of his exists by which they might speak of him. When all *dhammas* have been removed, then all ways of speaking are also removed. (SN 1074–1076)

The "setting" to which the flame goes when it is blown out is analogous to the setting of the sun, which goes to its "*attha*" (Sanskrit *asta*), its home, when it sinks below the horizon. 'Going home' (*atthagama* or *atthaṃgama*) is used as an expression for any extinction or disappearance; we find it used instead of

[4] That the Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist and so on is denied explicitly in the *Avyākatasaṃyutta*, S iv 374ff.

'*nirodha*' in statements about the five aggregates, their origin and their cessation.[5] Thus the "setting" of the sage might appear to be nothing more than his extinction; but of course if it were simply that, there would be no obvious reason not to say that one who "has gone to his setting" does not exist.

It may be recalled that one of the questions raised in the *Kathāvatthu* is whether the person who has attained Parinirvana "exists in the Goal", and the Pudgalavādin is represented as saying initially that he does (KV 1.1.228). The Pali is "*atth' atthamhi natth' atthamhi*"; the word corresponding to "in the Goal" is '*atthamhi*' (locative of '*attha*'). The commentary indicates that this "*attha*" is Nirvana (KVA 34), and in their translation, Aung and Rhys Davids not unreasonably took '*attha*' as the cognate of Sanskrit '*artha*' in the sense of "the Goal" or "the Good" (PC 56, n. 2). But we might wonder whether '*attha*' here is not rather the cognate of '*asta*', "home". The Pudgalavādins would then be saying that when the person has "gone home" to Nirvana he exists in that home. That such an interpretation is possible is confirmed by the commentary on the "Upasīvamāṇavapucchā" (SNA 2.472), which says, "He goes to the home (*attha*) which is called Parinirvana without support (*anupādāparinibbāna*)." It seems likely, in fact, that the expression in the *Kathāvatthu* is a direct allusion to this passage in the "Upasīvamāṇavapucchā".

The flame that has been blown out (unlike the fire in the *Aggivacchagotta-sutta*) is here explicitly said to go to a "home" which is incalculable or inexpressible; the extinct flame, it seems, is "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean". We are probably meant to assume, then, that the fire in the *Aggivacchagottasutta* is likewise deep, immeasurable and unfathomable after it has been extinguished, and the Buddha's analogy between the fire and the Tathāgata thus holds. But what sort of conception of fire is this, according to which it cannot be said to be non-existent when extinguished, but rather has gone (in no spatial direction) to a "home" which is beyond all categories of discourse?

A very ancient conception. In the Vedic hymns, Fire is a god, not the god of fire, but fire itself as something divine. He may be said to be born whenever a fire is kindled, and yet he always exists, hidden in the sticks by whose friction fire is produced, shining in the sun, and burning subtly within everything that lives.

> Fire is in the earth, in the plants; the waters bear Fire; Fire is in the stones;
> Fire is within people; in cows and horses are Fires.

[5] See, for example, the *Aggivacchagottasutta*: "*iti rūpaṃ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthagamo,*" etc. (M i 486).

> Fire shines from the sky; the god Fire possesses the spacious air. Mortals kindle Fire, who bears the oblations, who loves ghee. (AV 12.1.19, 20)

Fire is one god variously manifested.

In the Upanishads, fire is explicitly compared to the self, which is both the supreme self and all the particular selves which proceed from it:

> As the one fire has entered the world and has assumed a form corresponding to every form, so the one self within all beings has a form corresponding to every form, and yet is outside. (KU 2.2.9/5.9)

Here, as for the Pudgalavādins, it is the fuel which confers individuality upon the fire; the one fire is manifested according to the various kinds of fuel which support its appearance, becoming a counter-form to their various forms (*rūpaṃ rūpaṃ pratirūpo babhūva*). The disappearance of a particular fire will thus not represent any diminution of the one fire, and the fire that has disappeared, never having been in reality anything but the one fire itself, cannot be said to be destroyed. It is what it always was, though no longer observable where it appeared on the basis of its fuel, and thus no longer identifiable as that particular fire. So it cannot be said to exist (as the particular fire that it was), and yet what it always was and still is in reality cannot be said to be non-existent. It may after all be said to exist in (or as) the one fire to which (at least figuratively) it has "gone home". In the *Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad*, "the one god concealed within all beings, all-pervading, the inner self of all beings," who is "without parts, without action, tranquil, faultless, immaculate", is accordingly compared to "a fire whose fuel is burnt" (ŚU 6.11, 19).

But could such a conception of fire be in any way acceptable to Buddhists? Surely this is precisely the kind of conception that the Buddha was concerned to avoid. In the *Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra*, he is represented as saying:

> The eye when it arises does not come from anywhere, and when it ceases it does not go to accumulate anywhere. Thus, monks, having not existed it exists, and having existed it passes away again. (T99, 92c16–18)

But when this passage is cited in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB 5.27; DS ed. 813.1–5) as a refutation of the doctrine of the Sarvāstivādins that *dharmas* exist in the past and future as well as in the present, their response (Vasubandhu suggests) is that the Buddha meant simply that a *dharma* that arises exists in the

present only after not existing in the present; but it did exist in the future, as a future *dharma*. We can imagine the Pudgalavādins similarly arguing that what the Buddha meant is that where the fire exists before its production and after its extinction is not any actual place; it is only when it is kindled that the fire receives a location on the basis of its fuel. When the fire is extinguished, it "goes home", but its home is not to be sought in any of the ten directions.[6]

That such a conception of fire could indeed be acceptable to Buddhists is shown by a remarkable passage in the *Milindapañha*, a work preserved (and highly regarded) by the Theravādins although it seems to have been originally the product of some other school (Norman, 1983: 110ff.). King Milinda has asked the learned monk Nāgasena whether there is some place in some particular direction where Nirvana is stored. When Nāgasena replies that there is no such place, Milinda argues that Nirvana does not exist, since there is nowhere from which it can be produced. Nāgasena replies,

> There is no place, Great King, where Nirvana is stored up, but Nirvana exists, and one who has rightly practised will by his methodical attention realize Nirvana. Just as fire exists, Great King, though there is no place where it is stored up, and when two sticks are rubbed together the fire is produced, even so, Great King, Nirvana exists, though there is no place where it is stored up.... (MP 327)

Nāgasena has already explained (MP 269) that Nirvana cannot be produced but exists and can be attained. His explanation here makes sense only if fire is similarly believed to exist eternally though in no actual place, and to be produced (or more accurately, "attained"—*aggiṃ adhigacchati*) as a particular fire through the friction of the fire sticks. We do not have to assume that this conception of fire was ever universal among Buddhists or even widespread. But its adoption in a text like the *Milindapañha* as part of an explanation of the nature of Nirvana, without any suggestion that it might be regarded as inconsistent with the teaching of the Buddha, certainly shows that it could have been adopted also by the Pudgalavādins as a way of indicating the nature of the indeterminate self.

Moreover, in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, we find the fire that has been extinguished used to explain the "eternal body" (常身 *cháng shēn*) of the Buddha:

[6] Skilling (1997: 614) notes that according to Bhavya the Sāṃmitīyas did not accept the *Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra*. See *Tarkajvālā*, P5256, 75b1.

> Pūrṇa (富那 Fùnuó) said, Gautama, why is the eternal body not east, west, south or north?
>
> The Buddha said, Son of good family, I will now ask you a question; reply to it as you think best. What is your opinion, son of good family: if a great bonfire were burning before you, while it was burning, would you know that it was burning?
>
> Yes, Gautama.
>
> And when the fire was extinguished, would you know that it was extinguished?
>
> Yes, Gautama.
>
> Pūrṇa, if there were someone who asked, "When the fire that was before you was burning, where did it come from, and when it was extinguished, where did it go?" how would you reply?
>
> Gautama, if there were someone who asked me that, I would reply, "When the fire was produced, it depended upon a quantity of fuel; when its original fuel was exhausted and no further fuel was brought to it, the fire was then extinguished."
>
> And if someone asked further, "When the fire was extinguished, in what direction did it go?" how would you reply?
>
> Gautama, I would reply that because the fuel was exhausted, the fire was extinguished; it did not go anywhere.
>
> Son of good family, so it is also with the Tathāgata. If there is physical form which is impermanent [and the other aggregates] up to consciousness which is impermanent, then because of thirst there is burning. The burning is the acquisition of the twenty-five kinds of existence. So while it was burning one could say that the fire was east, west, south or north. But now that the thirst is extinguished, the twenty-five kinds of existence which resulted from it no longer burn. Without the burning, one cannot say that there is any east, west, south or north for him. Son of good family, the Tathāgata has extinguished the physical form that is impermanent [and the other aggregates] up to the consciousness that is impermanent, and so his body is eternal. If his body is eternal, it is impossible to say that there is any east, west, south or north for him. (T374, 597a7–21; T375, 845a15–b2)

This is of course very similar to the passage in the *Aggivacchagottasutta*. But here it is not simply the Tathāgata but the Tathāgata's eternal body that is compared to the fire that has gone out. Whatever the precise nature of this "eternal

body", it seems clear that the extinguished fire is assumed to be not simply non-existent but rather to have returned to a non-local, unmanifested state which is thus analogous to that of the Tathāgata in his eternal body after his death. There is nothing inherently implausible, then, in the supposition that the Pudgalavādins interpreted the analogy of fire in a somewhat similar fashion.

The *pudgala*, at least according to our earlier sources, was supposed to be a conceptual entity. Would the particular fire which is the manifestation of the one eternal fire be similarly regarded as conceptual?

For Buddhists of other schools, Buddhists like Harivarman and Vasubandhu, the particular fire as an entity that is kindled and persists while its fuel is being consumed is obviously conceptual: it is constantly changing and is thus never identical with what it was or what it will be; it is nothing but a stream, a succession of particles of heat. But even if the Pudgalavādins agreed that the particular fire was conceptual in this sense, this could not serve as a basis for the analogy between the *pudgala* and the fire; as we have seen, the Pudgalavādins compare the *pudgala* and its aggregates not to the fire and its constituent particles of heat, but to the fire and its fuel. The fuel is not what the fire is made of, but what it depends on. If the Pudgalavādins thought of the particular fire as conceptual, it must have been in some other way than this.

The particular fire is supposed to be a manifestation, the appearing of the one fire in a particular place on the basis of its fuel. It is thus the one fire itself, but the one fire as seen in a particular location. As fire, then, it is simply fire, but as this particular fire it is fire locally appearing and locally conceived. The particular fire, the fire proceeding on the basis of its fuel, could accordingly be regarded as a conceptual entity, for it is constituted (as that particular fire) simply by the location in which it appears and by the fuel which supports it: it is only in terms of these that it can be identified as that particular fire. But in itself, as the one fire which appears equally as that fire and all others, it is nothing particular at all.

But what sort of conceptual entity is the particular fire, defined as it is by its location and its support? As an appearance of the one fire, distinct from other such appearances and distinguishable conceptually from the one fire itself, it is similar to an image, as though the one fire were reflected in all the places in the world where fuel is kindled. Something of the kind is actually suggested by the passage from the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* which we noted earlier: the term '*pratirūpa*' (counter-form) can also be used for an image reflected in water (BU 2.1.8; CU 8.8.1). It is true that this is not how Śaṅkara interprets the passage; he explains the *pratirūpa* rather as the form assumed by the fire in conforming to its fuel. But in commenting on a line in Bādarāyana's *Brahmasūtra* (2.3.50) which is also

concerned with the relation between the one self and its individual manifestations, he offers the analogy of the sun reflected in water (*jalasūryaka*):[7]

> And this individual soul (*jīva*) is to be understood as a mere appearance of the supreme self, like a reflection of the sun in water and so on; it is not actually the same as that [supreme self], nor is it a different thing.

The passage from the *Katha-upaniṣad* closely resembles (and is no doubt meant to recall) a verse from the *Rig Veda* (6.47.18) which is quoted in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*. In this verse it is clear that the individual manifestation can in fact be thought of as an image in a double sense, as reflecting both the forms in which it appears and the being which is thus manifested:

> He has assumed a form corresponding to every form; that form of his is for the purpose of manifestation. Indra goes in many forms through his magical powers.... (BU 2.5.19)

Indra, here identified with the supreme self, assumes the forms of all the various beings and so reflects them, and is made known or manifested through them and is thus reflected in them. We might accordingly think of both the individual fire and the *pudgala* as images in these two senses. The fire is a reflection of the fuel from which it derives its individuality and also a reflection of the one fire to which it "goes home" upon extinction. The *pudgala* is a reflection of the five aggregates through which it can be identified as this particular person and also a reflection of that to which it "goes home" in attaining Parinirvana.

But what is it that the *pudgala* returns to in Parinirvana? The analogy with fire and its use in the Upanishads would suggest that it is the one self of which all individual selves or *pudgalas* are reflections. Did the Pudgalavādins then believe in a supreme self?

As we have already seen, there is no real evidence to support such an interpretation. And if that had been their belief, we might expect to find some indication of it, even in the few works that have come down to us. A belief of this kind, moreover, would surely not have been allowed to pass uncriticized by the other schools. Unless new evidence comes to light, we must continue to assume that the Pudgalavādins maintained the existence only of individual selves or *pudgalas*, not of the single, supreme self of the Upanishads.

7 Bādarāyana himself refers to the analogy of the sun in water at 3.2.18.

What then was their belief? It would seem to have been that Nirvana itself is what appears in the five aggregates as a self or *pudgala*. We have already seen that Candrakīrti ascribes to the Pudgalavādins the view that it is the quiescence of the *pudgala*, when Samsara has come to an end for it, that is called Nirvana: "just that [state of coming and going of the *pudgala*] which proceeds according to its dependence, now that it is independent and no longer proceeding, is described as Nirvana" (PPMV 530.1). This seems to say that Nirvana is a state of the *pudgala*, and that in turn would apparently indicate that the *pudgala* continues to exist even in Parinirvana, unless Nirvana is simply a state of non-existence. But as we noted earlier, the *pudgala* is neither annihilated in Parinirvana nor eternal; and accordingly, Nirvana cannot be simply the non-existence of a previously existing pudgala, nor can it be a state belonging to a *pudgala* that continues to exist, since with the final passing of the aggregates in Parinirvana, there is no longer anything to support the *pudgala*. Now according to the *Kathāvatthu* (1.1.226),[8] the Pudgalavādins deny that the aggregates, Nirvana and the *pudgala* are three separate things. So Nirvana, which is all that remains in Parinirvana, is not separate from the *pudgala* whose aggregates have passed away without recurrence; the *pudgala* is thus not annihilated, since something continues which is not altogether different from it. On the other hand, the *pudgala* itself cannot be said to exist eternally as Nirvana, since the *pudgala* depends on the support of its aggregates for its existence, whereas Nirvana is unsupported.

Moreover, because Nirvana is unsupported and uncreated, it must, if it exists at all, exist eternally without any beginning; it cannot merely come into existence at the moment of enlightenment. Thus there can be no question of the *pudgala*'s becoming Nirvana, if by that is meant that the destruction of the *pudgala* is at the same time the creation of Nirvana. The *pudgala* is not destroyed, and Nirvana is uncreated. Clearly Nirvana, as something not different from the *pudgala*, already exists while the *pudgala* exists, and continues to exist, as something not different from the *pudgala*, when the *pudgala* has passed away (as *pudgala*) in Parinirvana.

In order to clarify the relationship between this uncreated Nirvana and the *pudgala* which is not separate from it, we referred again to the analogy of fire. If it is one fire which appears as all the individual fires and to which the individual fires return when they are extinguished, then it should be the one Nirvana which appears as all the *pudgalas* and to which they eventually return when they attain Parinirvana. When the fire returns to its primordial state, it is no longer a fire burning in the world, and as the Buddha is represented as saying in the

[8] Nālandā ed. 1.1.211; p. 62.

"Upasīvamāṇavapucchā", it "goes to its setting, beyond definition" (SN 1074); so likewise the *pudgala* that has attained Parinirvana is no longer a *pudgala* supported by the five aggregates but "goes to its setting, beyond definition." The fire becomes something boundless in its extinction; so also the *pudgala*. But what was present in the individual fire was simply the one fire appearing where the fuel supported its manifestation; what is present in the *pudgala* where the five aggregates support its manifestation is simply Nirvana.

The fact that we have found it necessary to look at texts from the Brahmanical tradition to explain the Pudgalavādins' use of the analogy of fire may suggest that our interpretation is not really Buddhist at all (even though we have found something similar in the *Milindapañha* and the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*), and that either the Pudgalavādins were more Brahmanical than Buddhist, or else we have misunderstood their position. That the individual self "goes home" to the supreme self as the individual fire to the one fire is perfectly appropriate in the context of the Upanishads; that the *pudgala* "goes home" in the same way to Nirvana may seem fundamentally unbuddhist. Nevertheless, it may be recalled that our interpretation of the passages in our Pudgalavādin sources was based in the first place on Buddhist texts such as the *Aggivacchagottasutta* and the "Upasīvamāṇavapucchā" from the Pali canon. And there is another text, also from the Tipiṭaka of the Theravādins, which suggests even more strongly the kind of "going home" that we have been considering:

> And just as whatever rivers in the world, monks, run into the great ocean and whatever showers fall upon it from the air, the great ocean is not known to be lessened or filled by that, so, monks, however many monks attain Parinirvana in the realm of Nirvana (*nibbānadhātu*) without residue, the realm of Nirvana is not known to be lessened or filled by that. (U 55)

The ocean consists of water; the rivers and rain likewise are water. But the ocean is infinite (at any rate, for the purposes of the simile); the rivers and rain are of the same substance, but in finite quantities. When the rivers and rain reach the ocean, they vanish into it without altering it in the least. They no longer exist as rivers and lakes, but the water they consisted of has not ceased to exist; they are thus neither eternal nor annihilated. And if we think of the ocean simply as water, it is the ocean itself, projected in the limited forms of rivers and rain, which "goes home" to that same ocean; it is after all the ocean's water, condensing from the atmosphere, which flows into it in the rivers and descends upon it as rain.

If monks who attain Parinirvana are analogous to the rivers and rain that return to the ocean, that certainly suggests something like the doctrine that we have arrived at, according to which the *pudgala* consists of Nirvana, though in a form limited by the aggregates, and in attaining Parinirvana, with the passing away of the aggregates which limited and thus defined it, "goes home" to what it was essentially from the beginning. But then what is Nirvana? Why did the Pudgalavādins not (as it seems) describe it as a "supreme self"?

One reason for not describing Nirvana as a self of any kind would be the fact that in the early sutras, at least, there seems to be no authority for it at all. If the Buddha himself had thought of Nirvana as a supreme self, surely there would be some record of his having said so. And there is one place in the Pali canon, in the *Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta*, where, if anywhere, we might expect to find Nirvana described in this way: it is a series of short sutras about the uncreated (S iv 368-373), in each of which the uncreated is referred to by a different term. But among the thirty-two terms which appear there (and which include "*nibbāna*"), there is nothing like "self" or "supreme self".

Moreover, there is a sentence in the *Saṃyuktāgama* (T99, 66b14, 16, c7, 9, 22) which may amount to a denial that Nirvana is a self. It states that "all *dharmas* are non-self" (一切法無我 *yíqiè fǎ wúwǒ*), and since Nirvana is a *dharma* (the uncreated *dharma*), it certainly seems to follow that Nirvana cannot be a self. But when this is quoted to the Vātsīputrīyas in the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* (to show that there cannot be any self), the reply which Vasubandhu proposes on their behalf is that the *pudgala* is neither a *dharma* nor different from a *dharma* (AKB 9; DS ed. 1204.4), and the implication seems to be that the expression "all *dharmas*" would refer only to the *dharmas* of the five aggregates, in relation to which the *pudgala* is neither identical nor different. Moreover, Bhavya says that according to the Vātsīputrīyas, Nirvana cannot be said to be the same as all *dharmas* or different from them (P5640, 255c3); that certainly indicates that Nirvana is either not thought of as a *dharma* at all or else is understood to be not included among "all *dharmas*". The phrase "all *dharmas*" would thus in the latter case mean either "all created *dharmas*" or (which comes to the same thing) "all other *dharmas*". The sutra on "The All" in the Pali canon explains "the all" as the six faculties and their objects (S iv 15); if "the all" is equivalent to "all *dharmas*", that too would seem to indicate that Nirvana is not (or need not be) included among all *dharmas*, since the end of suffering is achieved by abandoning the all (S iv 15–18). Still, Nirvana is certainly a *dharma* according to the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins; if the Pudgalavādins likewise thought of Nirvana, the uncreated, as a *dharma* (as we have assumed until now),

then Nirvana is also in fact a *dharma* in relation to which the *pudgala* is neither identical nor different, since the *pudgala* and Nirvana are clearly not identical, and the Pudgalavādin in the *Kathāvatthu* denies that the aggregates, Nirvana and the *pudgala* are three different things (KV 1.1.226).[9] It is thus possible, though not certain, that the Pudgalavādins would have understood the statement that all *dharmas* are non-self as denying that Nirvana is a self.

But there is another reason, which is simply that selfhood as defined by the Pudgalavādins is inconsistent with the nature of Nirvana. The *pudgala* is a self which is dependent on a particular system of the five aggregates. Any particular *pudgala* or self is not the same as other *pudgalas*, which depend on other systems of the five aggregates. To be oneself is after all to be different from other persons. But Nirvana is the same Nirvana for everyone; if it were a self, it would be one self which everyone had in common. But as the Pudgalavādins understand it, a self which is the same self for everyone is not really a self at all. When the Brahmanical philosophers use the term '*ātman*' for the one reality which appears as individual selves, they use it in a sense quite different from the Pudgalavādins', for whom the self is something identifiable by its aggregates as a fire is identifiable by its fuel. It is true that the self is an individual, limited manifestation of Nirvana; but Nirvana itself is neither individual nor limited.

As for what Nirvana is in itself, there is surely not very much to be said. But it is evidently not wholly different from the person who attains it. If what we know as a person is something infinite in itself but finite in its manifestation, there must be some aspect or dimension of the person that is infinite. This is clearly not any of the five aggregates, and yet it seems that it cannot be identified as something apart from them. (Nirvana is neither the same as all *dharmas* nor different from them.) But there must be something in the person which can be realized as infinite, something which when viewed from the right angle, as it were, can be recognized as Nirvana.

There are two passages, one of them in one of our Pudgalavādin sources, which may give some indication of how this was understood. The first is in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*:

> When one gains Nirvana without residue [that is, Parinirvana], then the unshakeable happiness is attained. But if the person were eternal, it would have neither birth nor death, like Nirvana.... (T1649, 466a11f.)

[9] Nālandā ed. 1.1.211; p. 62.

This is a response to opponents who have argued that the self or *pudgala* is eternal because in Parinirvana it attains the unshakeable happiness. The Pudgalavādins reply that the *pudgala* is not eternal because it is subject to birth and death, and indeed precisely because it does attain Parinirvana; for as the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka* puts it, "With conception according to cessation, the permanence of the living being is precluded" (T 1505, 10a28). But they do not of course deny that the unshakeable happiness is present (though not present *to* anyone) in Parinirvana. Since there are no aggregates in Parinirvana, there is no one to whom the happiness could belong; there is only Nirvana, and so the happiness must be either a feature of Nirvana or (more plausibly) Nirvana itself. As we have already seen, the Vātsīputrīyas argued that Nirvana is something existent (and not only the non-existence of body, faculties and thought) on the basis of this happiness which in some sense belongs to it (P5256, 38a5f.; Iida, 1980: 196)[10]

But if it is somewhat unsatisfactory to describe the happiness as a feature of Nirvana when Nirvana is supposed to be non-composite and thus perfectly simple, it seems hardly less so to identify happiness with Nirvana itself. We are told that Nirvana, the content of the Noble Truth of Cessation, has no characteristic (T 1506, 24c28); but happiness is surely a particular mental state which can be characterized. The Theravādins include *sukha* (pleasure or happiness) in the aggregate of feeling, *vedanā* (VM 4.100); on the other hand, in the *Kathāvatthu* they refer to the two kinds of Nirvana as "happiness with substratum" and "happiness without substratum" (KV 2.8.1),[11] and in fact the *Dhammapada* identifies Nirvana as the ultimate happiness (DP 204). The "happiness without substratum" is of courses Parinirvana, in which there is no longer any substratum of feeling and the other aggregates. So if we are to ascribe the ultimate happiness to Nirvana, it would appear that Nirvana (which was supposed to be devoid of feeling and the other aggregates, and indeed to have no characteristic at all) should in fact have the characteristics which belong to happiness, or else happiness itself should be the characteristic of Nirvana.

Perhaps we should say that the happiness of Nirvana is not to be identified with any sort of happiness that we ordinarily experience, but is rather something whose effect when realized is somewhat similar to that of happiness and which can accordingly be designated, though only figuratively, by the same term. *Sukha* seems in any case to be a rather elusive *dharma*, and perhaps it could be thought of in all cases as something which cannot be characterized in itself, but

10 See above, p. 70.

11 Nālandā ed. 2.18.32; p. 191.

which emerges as the *dharmas* which obstruct its appearance pass away, and which can then be characterized according to the circumstances of its emergence. Happiness in the usual sense of the term, as a mental state, would then turn out to be one of the various forms in which Nirvana is manifested in the experience of Samsara.

The second passage is canonical; it is one from the *Kevaddhasutta* which we noted in our initial discussion of the doctrine of non-self:[12]

> A consciousness that is indefinable, infinite and universally brilliant:
> here earth, water, fire and air have no footing,
> and long and short, fine and coarse, fair and foul.
> Here both name and form perish without remainder.
> Through the cessation of consciousness, those perish here. (D i 223)

It seems clear that this refers to Nirvana. But Nirvana is identified here as a kind of consciousness which is infinite and universally brilliant. The commentary (DA ii 393) explains this "consciousness" as what we are to be conscious of (*viññātabba*) rather than as our being conscious, no doubt because consciousness in the latter sense is one of the five aggregates and passes away in Parinirvana, as the last line of the passage indicates. But if consciousness is taken to be analogous to fire, the cessation or extinction of consciousness will not be equivalent to its non-existence. As the individual fire that is extinguished "goes home" to the unfathomable one fire, the consciousness that attains cessation will "go home" to its unmanifest state, which we may think of as unlimited and thus universally brilliant. According to this interpretation, the consciousness that is infinite and the consciousness that has ceased are not in fact two different kinds of consciousness, or two different things at all: the individual consciousness that has ceased *is* infinite and universally brilliant in its cessation.

But if consciousness and the *pudgala* both "go home" to Nirvana when they attain cessation, can the *pudgala* perhaps be identified with consciousness? Apparently not. Consciousness (in this case) is one of the five aggregates; but the *pudgala* is neither the same as the aggregates nor different from them. Moreover, there is a sutra in which the Buddha explicitly denies that "this very consciousness runs on, transmigrates, not another" (M i 258). But the *pudgala* is precisely that which "runs on, transmigrates". If this sutra formed part of the canon of the Pudgalavādins, it would have been difficult in any case for them to identify the *pudgala* with consciousness.

12 See above, p. 25.

Nevertheless, if consciousness that has ceased "goes home" to Nirvana, and if Nirvana itself can be described (even if only figuratively) as a kind of consciousness, it would seem that the *pudgala*, as an entity not wholly different from either the consciousness which is the fifth aggregate or the infinite consciousness which is Nirvana, ought also to be something at least similar to consciousness. And we have understood the *pudgala* to be Nirvana itself appearing in a limited form; if Nirvana is a kind of consciousness, it is hard to see how the *pudgala* can be anything but a kind of consciousness likewise. Perhaps we could think of the *pudgala* as something intermediate between the timeless and infinite consciousness which is Nirvana and the momentary and limited consciousness which constitutes the fifth aggregate in the individual person. The *pudgala* would thus be a local manifestation of consciousness possessing neither the permanence (or timelessness) of Nirvana nor the radical impermanence of the fifth aggregate.

We need to bear in mind, however, that Nirvana is not usually described in the sutras as infinite consciousness; the passage that I have cited seems to be unique. (The first line of it, describing the infinite consciousness, appears also in the *Brahmanimantaṇikasutta*, M i 329, but apparently nowhere else.) And even if Nirvana is a kind of consciousness, it is evidently so different from any ordinary consciousness as to amount to another reality altogether. What sort of consciousness is it, after all, in which not even the subtlest object of consciousness occurs? Neither the Theravādins nor the Sarvāstivādins (as far as I know) ever use this passage as a basis for describing Nirvana as consciousness, and as we have seen, the Theravādin commentary explains the term '*viññāṇa*' not as "consciousness" but as "what we are to be conscious of", that is, as an *object* of consciousness. This latter interpretation seems to me to be quite as unsatisfactory in its own way as taking Nirvana to be consciousness in the ordinary sense—after all, if Nirvana is an object "attained" by our becoming conscious of it, surely it would be lost again in Parinirvana when the consciousness of it has ceased—but it shows the extent to which the commentator was concerned to avoid any suggestion that Nirvana is merely a subjective state. Now if the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins were not willing to describe Nirvana as consciousness even though there appears to be canonical authority for such a description, we cannot assume that this was how the Pudgalavādins described it, however plausible such a description may seem.

Before concluding, however, we should note a sentence in the *Sì ēhánmù chāojiě*, Kumārabuddhi's version of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*, which seems to indicate that the Pudgalavādins did in fact think of Nirvana as infinite

consciousness, or at least as associated with it: "This Nirvana is connected with infinite consciousness" (T 1505, 4c24). But the force of this is not very clear. It might mean that infinite consciousness is to be thought of as something like an essential aspect of Nirvana, just as the unshakeable happiness is supposed to belong to it essentially; on this basis we might say that Nirvana (in one of its aspects) is infinite consciousness. But the sentence occurs as part of an explanation of how in the meditative state called "the wishless" (無願 *wúyuàn*, *apraṇihita*) all intentions have passed away, including the wish to transcend temporal existence in Nirvana. Since the passage is concerned with expectations about Nirvana rather than Nirvana itself, the meaning of the sentence may be simply that whereas anyone seeking Nirvana hopes for an end to suffering and rebirth, the consciousness of one attaining Nirvana becomes boundless, not fixed on anything desired or hoped for. The infinite consciousness would then not be Nirvana itself, or anything essential to Nirvana that would accordingly continue into Parinirvana, but simply the kind of consciousness associated with Nirvana until the time of death. It would thus be merely part of the "residue" of aggregates accompanying Nirvana for the remaining lifetime of the Buddha or Arhat.

Moreover, there is nothing similar to this sentence in Saṅghadeva's version; at the point corresponding to it, there is only a reference to transcending the three times (T 1506, 19a26). Neither version is in any case very clear, and it is hard to say whether one or the other is actually a misrepresentation of the original, or whether they are the result of two different attempts to interpret a passage of unusual difficulty; the divergent obscurities of the two versions may after all spring from some obscurity or corruption in the original text. The sentence is certainly interesting, but under these circumstances it would be unwise to give much weight to it as evidence.

Nevertheless, we may speculate. Nirvana is supposed to be a realm devoid of all characteristics that derive from the particular elements of ordinary experience; yet it seems that we may characterize it as unshakeable happiness. That it has the character of happiness may be precisely because of its emptiness of all characteristics, that is to say, because of its boundlessness, its freedom from the distinctions and ramifications of Samsara; and as happiness, it must also have something of the character of experience or consciousness. On this basis, then, we may think of it as an experience or consciousness which is infinite.

To the extent that Nirvana can be thought of as a kind of consciousness, it no doubt makes sense to think of the *pudgala* as likewise a kind of consciousness in which the infinite consciousness, Nirvana, appears locally as though reflected in the five aggregates. But to the extent that Nirvana is thought of as transcending

all categories of discourse, the *pudgala* likewise will be thought of not only as indeterminate in its relation to the physical form, feeling, perception, mental forces and consciousness on whose basis it appears, but also as utterly unfathomable in its essential nature.

Chapter 12

Recapitulation

WE BEGAN by considering the teaching of the Buddha as it has been preserved in the Pali Canon, noting some of the ambiguities that made possible the development of diverse traditions of interpretation. Then, after a discussion of the history of the Pudgalavāda and of the sources available to us for the study of its doctrines, we turned to the question of the self, its nature and its significance according to the Pudgalavāda.

We found that although some of our later non-Pudgalavādin sources seem to suggest that the Pudgalavādins used the term '*pudgala*' to disguise their acceptance of the reality of an *ātman*, the Pudgalavādins themselves were evidently quite open in their identification of *pudgala* with *ātman*, person with self; but of course they insisted that the person or self, unlike the self as understood by the non-Buddhist traditions, was neither the same as the phenomena by which the person is identified nor different from them. The person was thus "inexpressible" as either identical or different, but it could still be conceived or designated (*prajñapta*) in three ways: according to its basis, according to its transition, and according to its cessation. The *Sāṃmitīyanikāya-śāstra* speaks of the person conceived in these three ways as "three kinds of person", as if the person were actually constituted by our conception of it.

This led us to ask whether the Pudgalavādins might have regarded the person as a conceptual entity. We found that in our earlier sources, the *pudgala* is in fact held to be conceptual; in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* it is said to be neither conceptual nor substantial, and in our later sources it is apparently assumed to be substantial. Unless the Pudgalavāda was consistently misrepresented by later writers, we could only conclude that the Pudgalavādins changed their position, or at least their expression of it, at about the time of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, in the fifth century CE. But then we were faced with the question of how the Pudgalavādins' earlier understanding of the *pudgala* as conceptual differed from their opponents', who held the *pudgala* or self to be unreal precisely because it was a conceptual entity.

We proceeded to consider the possibility, suggested by K. Venkataramanan, that it was not in fact the same self that was "true and ultimate" and also conceptual. According to this interpretation, the Pudgalavādins would have recognized two kinds of self, an absolute self which was real, and an individual

self, dependent on the aggregates, which was conceptual. But the evidence for such an interpretation proved inadequate, and we were obliged to conclude that it was the individual self or person which was "true and ultimate" although conceptual and accordingly insubstantial.

The disagreement between the Pudgalavādins and their opponents thus seemed to be not about whether the *pudgala* was conceptual or not, both agreeing that it was, but about whether as a conceptual entity, admittedly insubstantial, it could be considered "true and ultimate". Their opponents held that such an entity could be said to exist only conventionally; the Pudgalavādins evidently affirmed it as part of ultimate truth. But the Pudgalavādins' doctrine of the truths turned out to be rather complex. Whereas most Buddhists recognized two truths, ultimate and conventional, to which the Four Noble Truths were variously assigned, the Pudgalavādins recognized three truths, ultimate, characteristical and practical, identifying the Truth of Cessation as ultimate truth and the other three Noble Truths as characteristical. But they also distinguished between doctrines concerning *dharmas* and doctrines concerning sentient beings or persons; this distinction, it seems, must have cut across the distinctions between the three truths: ultimate truth, characteristical truth and practical truth all could be expressed in terms either of *dharmas* or of persons. The existence of the *pudgala* would thus be acknowledged in all three of the truths; persons would be no less "true and ultimate" than the *dharmas* upon which they depend.

We then proceeded on the assumption that the disagreement between the Pudgalavādins and their opponents was a disagreement about the status of the person as a composite entity. Both agreed that such an entity was conceptual; but the Pudgalavādins, we supposed, held that the person was not reducible to its constituent aggregates, that the whole was not reducible to its parts, while their opponents held on the contrary that the person was conceptual precisely because it was reducible to its aggregates, that any statement about the whole was translatable into statements about its constituents. We noted a limited sense in which a whole is not in fact reducible to its parts, and suggested that it was on this basis that the Pudgalavādins argued for the truth and ultimacy of the *pudgala*.

There was still the question of why the issue was felt to be important. If both sides acknowledged that the *pudgala* was conceptual and indeterminate in its relation to the aggregates, why did it matter whether the *pudgala* thus qualified was "true and ultimate" or not? To the other schools it seemed clear that the aggregates were all that really existed in what we call a person; to ascribe truth and ultimacy to the person, however qualified, would have seemed to reintroduce

that belief in self which the Buddha had sought to dispel. The Pudgalavādins for their part, we supposed, believed that the Buddha had indeed taught the existence of the *pudgala* as something "true and ultimate", and that the reduction of the person to its impersonal constituents would not only remove the basis for one's own self-centredness, craving and attachment, as their opponents maintained, but would also have the effect of depersonalizing persons other than oneself, so that there would be no longer any basis for the moral qualities, the benevolence, compassion and sympathetic joy, which the Buddha had recommended. Without recognition of the truth and ultimacy of the person, the teaching of the Buddha would seem to result in a cold detachment quite unlike the warmth and humanity exemplified by the Buddha himself.

All of this seemed fairly plausible. But we then noted some difficulties with our interpretation. We had assumed, following the explanation in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, that the *pudgala* was conceptual in the sense that it was a system of real constituents grasped conceptually as a single whole. But we found that the analogies which the Pudgalavādins used to explain the relationship between the *pudgala* and the aggregates were in fact inconsistent with this assumption. We noted also that there was no obvious basis for distinguishing between the kind of whole that would be significant for karma and the kind that would not, between a sentient being, that is, and any other system of real constituents. Moreover, of the three concepts of the person described in our sources, only the concept according to the basis could be understood in this way. The concept according to transition was based at least partly on past and future *dharmas*, which in the view of the Pudgalavādins were non-existent and thus certainly not the constituents of anything actually existing, and the concept according to cessation was based entirely on *dharmas* which had passed away without any recurrence. Furthermore, the three concepts, based as they were on different *dharmas* (or absences of *dharmas*), would surely constitute three different kinds of conceptual entity; what then would become of the on-going identity of the person? The conceptual entities of these different kinds could not be regarded as so many different ways of conceiving the same person, as if there were some person existing apart, extra-conceptually, from our conceptions of it; nor could they be construed as the parts of a single conceptual person extended throughout all of its successive lives (and beyond them, in Parinirvana), since according to this view almost all of its constituent entities at any particular time would be non-existent.

We suggested that the person might be constituted only by the concept according to the basis, and merely represented by the other two kinds of concept.

But there was still the difficulty that the person conceived according to the basis would be quite simply non-existent in Parinirvana, without the aggregates on whose basis it was conceived, whereas the Pudgalavādins held, in accordance with the sutras, that the person in Parinirvana cannot be said either to exist or not to exist. Our interpretation of the *pudgala* as a conceptual whole based on actually existing constituents thus proved unworkable.

If the *pudgala* was not a conceptual entity in the way in which we had assumed, what sort of conceptual entity was it? In the absence of any discussion of the nature of concepts in our Pudgalavādin sources, we turned to the traditions of the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins. There we found that there were two kinds of conceptual entity which were evidently simple and which might thus be similar to a conceptual *pudgala* which was not a composite entity even though it was dependent for its existence on the combination of the five aggregates. The first of these was the "conformable concept" or *tajjāpaññatti* (and the similar "concept of manifestation"), by which the essential nature of a *dharma* could be known when the *dharma* itself was no longer clearly present; the second was the "counterpart image", the *paṭibhāganimitta*, in which the object of meditation was represented to the meditator in a form which transcended its physical limitations. The *tajjāpaññatti* seems to have been a mental image of the *dharma* to which it referred. The *paṭibhāganimitta* was also something like an image, but since it had no shape and to that extent was dimensionless, it must have been more like an intuitive image or idea than an image in any ordinary sense. It was akin to Nirvana in being free of the characteristics of created *dharmas*, and it was also the means by which the meditator could apparently suspend the laws of the physical world. Nevertheless, it was not real but a conceptual entity, "born of perception"; it was understood to be a "concept based on" or *upādāpaññatti*, and was thus supposed to be an entity of the same type as the *pudgala*.

We then reviewed the evidence which had led us in the first place to suppose that the *pudgala* as a conceptual entity was simply the whole constituted by the five aggregates. Of the three passages that seemed to assert this, two were in fact inconclusive, and the third, in the *Tattvasiddhi*, was unambiguous only in the Chinese translation in which it has survived; closer examination suggested that it too in its original form permitted the interpretation we had adopted, but did not require it. There was thus no firm evidence to support our interpretation, and a good deal of evidence that went against it.

We proceeded to look for an alternative. We noted that the *pudgala* was supposed to constitute a unique category, "the inexpressible"; this suggested that it might be conceptual only in a somewhat loose sense, as bearing a limited

similarity to certain kinds of conceptual entity. These would be entities which were not composite; we thought of the *tajjāpaññatti* and the *paṭibhāganimitta* and wondered whether, like them, the *pudgala* might be a kind of image. But a mental image such as the *tajjāpaññatti* or the *paṭibhāganimitta* is normally private, existing only for the person who produces it; the *pudgala* would have to be an image that was public, observable by anyone who happened to be present.

Such an image is the reflection in a mirror. We observed that a number of passages in non-Pudgalavādin Buddhist sources compare the person to a reflected image, and that in one source, Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*, such a comparison is represented as acceptable to the Pudgalavādins. And some of our sources, including Candrakīrti, interpret the image in a mirror as conceptual. Nevertheless, the comparison is not to be found in any of the surviving Pudgalavādin works, and we concluded that even if it was acceptable to the Pudgalavādins, it was not one which they commonly used.

We then returned to the comparison which they seem to have used most frequently: fire and fuel. It must have seemed appropriate to them for a number of reasons: it appears frequently in the sutra literature; it suggests the continuity and relative distinctness of the *pudgala* in relation to its aggregates; and in the extinction of the fire it affords a model for Parinirvana. On the other hand, we noted that the extinction of a fire would seem to be just that, its final non-existence, whereas the *pudgala* that has attained "extinction" cannot be said either to exist or not to exist. However useful the analogy with fire and fuel might be in other respects, when it came to the matter of extinction it seemed to be actually misleading. And this was not merely the failure of an analogy when pushed beyond its proper limits. The Buddha is supposed to have used it specifically to clarify the nature of Parinirvana. We had to conclude that either the Buddha had tried to use an analogy that was inappropriate, or else we had misunderstood the analogy.

It was clear that the Pudgalavādins did not regard the *pudgala* in Parinirvana as simply non-existent. The Pudgalavādin in the *Kathāvatthu* is even willing to say that the *pudgala* which has attained complete cessation exists in Nirvana. In the *Prasannapadā*, the position of the Pudgalavādin seems to be that both Samsara and Nirvana are something like states of the *pudgala*. Yet because there *is* cessation, the *pudgala* was not said to be permanent. It was as if the *pudgala*, upon attaining complete cessation, vanished into Nirvana without becoming non-existent.

We wondered whether anything similarly mysterious could be said of the fire that has been extinguished. We saw that in the *Aggivacchagottasutta*, a fire that

has gone out cannot be said to have gone north, south, east or west, having simply gone out, whereas the Buddha who has attained Parinirvana is described as "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable", and cannot be said to arise or not to arise or both or neither. But in the "Upasīvamāṇavapucchā" in the *Suttanipāta*, the flame that has been blown out "flees to its setting, beyond definition"; the extinguished fire is evidently also deep, immeasurable and unfathomable. It has "gone home" to a home which is undiscoverable in any of the ten directions. The problem, then, was not with the analogy which the Buddha used, but with the conception of fire which we had assumed in trying to understand it.

In the flame whose extinction is beyond the categories of thought we recognized a conception of fire which is as old as the Vedic hymns. The god Agni is fire itself, a divine power manifesting itself wherever a fire is kindled. Every fire is Agni, but Agni is not limited to the particular fires by which he is manifested. In the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* we found the one fire which is variously manifested in the world compared explicitly to the one universal self of which every individual self is a manifestation. And in the *Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad*, "the one god concealed within all beings" is compared to "a fire whose fuel is burnt".

This conception of a fire which is not non-existent even after it is extinguished seemed inconsistent with the Buddha's teaching of impermanence. It thus appeared unlikely on the face of it that Buddhists would adopt a conception of fire which derived from the Brahmanical tradition and which apparently contradicted one of the central doctrines of Buddhism. But we noted that the doctrine of impermanence could be accommodated to interpretations of Buddhism which admitted a qualified permanence in things, and in the *Milindapañha*, a work preserved by the Theravādins, we found a passage in which the non-local existence of fire before it is kindled is offered as an analogy for the non-local existence of Nirvana before it is attained. If such a conception of fire could be assumed in a work like the *Milindapañha*, there was no reason for it not to have been assumed also by the Pudgalavādins.

We then asked whether the individual fire in which the one fire is manifested could be considered conceptual. We suggested that it might be thought of as conceptual in the sense that its individuality is not essential to it, since in itself it is simply the one fire, but rather derives from the means by which it is manifested, that is, from fuel burning in a particular location. As that particular fire, then, it might be considered conceptual.

There was still the question of what kind of conceptual entity the particular fire would constitute. The manifestation of the one fire in many locations on the basis of various kinds of fuel suggested something like reflection, with a single

reality appearing as an image wherever there was something to reflect it. We found passages from the Brahmanical tradition which confirmed that the particular fire might be regarded as a kind of image, and that the individual self was likewise thought of as a reflected image, in a double sense: it conforms to the body in which it appears and thus reflects it, and it is also an appearance of the supreme self and is thus a reflection of that. The *pudgala* could similarly have been thought of as an image whose individuality was a reflection of the succession of aggregates which supported it, and whose nature was a reflection of a reality transcending the world of Samsara.

Such an interpretation would be consistent with what we know of the Pudgalavādins' use of the analogy of fire. But we noted that there is no evidence to suggest that they thought of the *pudgala* as a reflection of a supreme self. The transcendent reality of which it was a reflection was probably understood to be Nirvana, which they held to be the only uncreated *dharma*. We recalled the passage in the *Prasannapadā* in which Nirvana according to the Pudgalavādins was said to be a state of the *pudgala*, the quiescence of its former "coming and going" in Samsara. Since the *pudgala* was supposed to be neither eternal nor annihilated, it seemed that there could not, strictly speaking, be any *pudgala* in Parinirvana for the state of quiescence to belong to. But Nirvana was not wholly different from the *pudgala*, and so as long as Nirvana existed, the *pudgala* could not be said to be altogether non-existent. Moreover, as the uncreated *dharma*, Nirvana was understood to have existed before the *pudgala*'s attainment of it, and then too, of course, as something not wholly different from it. Nirvana and the *pudgala* thus seemed to be analogous to the one fire and the individual fire, and of course to the supreme self and the individual self in the Brahmanical tradition. We found further confirmation that the *pudgala* could be thought of as returning to Nirvana as a fire to the one fire, even though such an interpretation might seem unbuddhist, in a passage from the *Udāna* in which the monks who attain Parinirvana are compared to the rivers and rain which enter into the ocean: since the rivers and rain are of the same substance as the ocean they return to, the implication is certainly that the essential nature of the *pudgala* is the same as that of the "realm of Nirvana", the *nibbānadhātu*, into which it vanishes in Parinirvana.

We noted three considerations which may account for the Pudgalavādins' unwillingness to describe Nirvana as a supreme self. The first was the lack of canonical authority for such a description. The second was the statement in the *Saṃyuktāgama* that all dharmas are non-self; unless it was not included among "all *dharmas*", Nirvana could not be a self. The third was Nirvana's manifest lack

of selfhood according to the Pudgalavādins' definition of a self: the self is individual, a limited being which depends on a particular system of the five aggregates, whereas Nirvana is the same for all, infinite and independent.

Finally, we considered the question of what Nirvana is in itself. One can hardly expect to say much about something which is beyond all categories of discourse, but we found two passages which gave some indication of how it might have been regarded. One was a passage in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* which spoke of the "unshakeable happiness" attained in Parinirvana; it seemed that this unshakeable happiness must be at least an essential aspect of Nirvana. The other was a passage in the *Kevaddhasutta* which suggested that Nirvana is a kind of infinite consciousness, and on that basis we noted the possibility that the Pudgalavādins thought of the *pudgala* as a form of consciousness intermediate between the infinite consciousness which is Nirvana and the momentary consciousness which is one of the five aggregates. But we concluded that since the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins, with the same evidence at their disposal, never spoke of Nirvana as a kind of consciousness, it is perhaps more likely that the Pudgalavādins thought of Nirvana as irreducible to anything in our ordinary experience, and of the *pudgala* likewise as unfathomable, a mysterious self projected, as it were, out of an infinite selflessness.

We are now in a position to form a reasonable picture of the Pudgalavādin doctrine of the self. The self or *pudgala* forms a unique category of being, situated between the three categories of created *dharmas* (past, present and future) and the category of the uncreated, which is Nirvana. It is supported by the created, and therefore impermanent, *dharmas* of the five aggregates, as a fire is supported by its fuel. Since it is supported by impermanent *dharmas*, it cannot be said to be permanent; when the series of *dharmas* which supported it has come to an end with Parinirvana, it is no longer existent. On the other hand, it does not share in the impermanence of its supporting *dharmas*, for it continues through life after life, and even in Parinirvana cannot be said to be non-existent. It is thus not the same as the five aggregates, since it continues as they arise and pass away, nor is it separate from them, since its existence is not independent of them.

Its nature can be conveyed, if only approximately, through the analogy of fire, provided that fire is thought of as something which is manifested wherever a fire is kindled, but which continues to exist even when all of its manifestations have passed away. Similarly, the self or *pudgala* is the manifestation of something which appears wherever there is a system of the five aggregates, and which continues to exist, though unmanifest in this world, when the five aggregates have come to final extinction. What is manifested as the self or

pudgala is evidently the uncreated *dharma*, Nirvana. Because the *pudgala* is simply the appearance in this world of Nirvana, it cannot be said to be permanent, since with the final cessation of the aggregates the appearance ceases, nor can it be said to be impermanent, since what appeared in it continues to exist. It is thus like an image in which Nirvana is reflected on the basis of the five aggregates. An image is not the same as the mirror in which it is reflected; it is something else, after all, that is reflected there. Nor is it separate from the mirror, since without the mirror there would be no image. In the same fashion, the *pudgala* is not the same as the aggregates in which it appears, nor is it separate from them, since it cannot appear without them.

The self or *pudgala* is like an image of Nirvana, but Nirvana is not a self. Selfhood is the form in which Nirvana is reflected on the basis of the five aggregates. To be a person is to have a particular body, particular feelings, perceptions, mental forces and consciousness, to have a particular ancestry, a particular home and occupation, and so on. Nothing of the sort can be ascribed to Nirvana. It is Nirvana that appears as the person, but the individuality of the person, the person's selfhood, is a product of the aggregates and their particular situation in the world.

The Buddha's teaching of non-self is to be understood as a rejection of any view of the self which ascribes to it the determinacy of a *dharma*. To identify the self with any of the aggregates is an error, and so also, to imagine it to be something distinct and independent of the aggregates. The denial that there is any self at all is likewise erroneous. To see the self rightly is to see it as indeterminate, as indescribable either as the same as the aggregates or as different from them.

The self of someone who is not enlightened functions selfishly, identifying itself with its body, feelings and so on, or else imagining itself as something apart from them and independent. But one who is enlightened sees the self as it is, as a finite reflection of something infinite, and therefore selfless, in the stream of the interdependent *dharmas* of the five aggregates. When the self sees itself in this way, identifying itself neither with the aggregates in whose stream it appears nor with the infinite reality of which it is an image, it no longer functions selfishly, but gives expression to the infinity of which it is a reflection. It then manifests a universality of understanding and compassion which is incomprehensible in terms of its identity and history as a self. The person who is enlightened, even while still alive, is thus "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean".

When such a person dies, since the forces of craving and attachment have come to an end, the aggregates no longer reproduce themselves in rebirth, and the image vanishes. The selfless reality which had appeared as a self reflected in the stream of the aggregates is unchanged; although the image in which it appeared has vanished, the reality is what it always was. Apart from the aggregates in which it was reflected, there was never anything in the self except that reality. The self as image no longer exists, but as Nirvana, which was always the content of that image, it cannot be said to be non-existent. The attaining of Nirvana can thus be understood as the realization of the content of the image, and Parinirvana, as the persistence of that content after the aggregates in which it was reflected have passed away.

Because the self or *pudgala* is something like a resultant image arising from the intersection of Samsara and Nirvana, much of what the Buddha taught can be expressed either in terms of the *dharmas* of Samsara and Nirvana, or in terms of the person who journeys through Samsara and may eventually reach Nirvana. The Four Noble Truths may be explained either as describing the character and behaviour of created *dharmas* and the existence of the uncreated, or as giving the information and procedures necessary for freeing the person from suffering and rebirth. The third Noble Truth is identified as the ultimate truth (or reality), Nirvana. The first, second and fourth Noble Truths are identified as characteristical truth, the created *dharmas* and their characteristics. Whatever deals indirectly with *dharmas* and persons, through convention, custom and the like, is identified as practical truth. The self or *pudgala* is involved in all three of these truths, as in all four of the Noble Truths.

Is the *pudgala* conceptual or substantial? To the extent that it is a kind of image, identifiable only by reference to the locus in which it occurs, it seems reasonable to describe it as conceptual, like the "conformable concept" (*tajjāpaññatti*), the "counterpart image" (*paṭibhāganimitta*), and (according to some accounts) the image in a mirror. But to the extent that it is Nirvana itself appearing on the basis of the five aggregates, we may say that it is not conceptual and certainly not mind produced, as any concept normally is, but rather substantial, since Nirvana exists in itself and is independent of any activity of the mind. For according to the interpretation which I am proposing, the *pudgala* is not simply a limited replica of Nirvana, but rather Nirvana itself paradoxically circumscribed within the limits of organic existence. Similarly, the fire which is kindled here with these particular sticks for fuel is not a replica of the one fire, but is that fire itself appearing here on the basis of this fuel. It is only in this way, I

believe, that we can make sense of the *pudgala*'s attaining Nirvana and its continuance as "not non-existent" in Parinirvana.

The *pudgala* is thus less like the sky reflected as an image in a pool of water (for example), where the sky is in one place and the image in another, than the sky itself seen through a window and seeming limited because of the frame surrounding and defining what is seen. According to the one analogy, the image would have to be thought of as reunited with its original in Parinirvana; otherwise, the image will be simply non-existent, having passed away with the aggregates that supported it. According to the other, it was the original itself which was seen within the frame of the aggregates as a kind of image, and which continues in Parinirvana after the frame has vanished. But these are in any case only analogies, and can do no more than suggest the relationship which the Pudgalavādins seem to have affirmed between the *pudgala* and Nirvana.

The *pudgala* can be thought of, then, as either conceptual or substantial. Since it can be identified only through the aggregates on which it is based, it may be considered conceptual; but since its content is the uncreated *dharma*, Nirvana, it may be considered substantial. But it is not conceptual or substantial in any usual sense of either term. Unlike any ordinary conceptual entity, it is publicly observable and independent of any particular perception or ideation. Unlike the created *dharmas*, it is indeterminate, neither the same as the *dharmas* it is based on nor separate from them. The Vātsiputrīya in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* is represented accordingly as denying that it is either conceptual or substantial. Its nature is evidently unique.

Fire, as traditionally conceived, is after all the best analogy to convey the unique nature of the indeterminate self. As the individual fire is identified by its fuel, so the *pudgala* is identified by its particular body, feelings, perception, mental forces and consciousness. As the fire continues, always changing and yet always the same fire, passing from one kind of fuel to another, so the person continues as the same sentient being through all the alterations of personal existence, life after life. As the fire is eventually extinguished when the last of its fuel has been consumed, so the person attains cessation with the final vanishing of the aggregates. And as the fire is really the one fire, whether burning or extinct, so the person is the same ultimate reality, whether wandering through Samsara or finally passed away into Parinirvana. The fire that is extinct and the person in Parinirvana are alike beyond all categories of discourse; they are "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean". Anyone who has noticed the odd stillness and feeling of expansion that follows upon the extinguishing of a

candle can no doubt appreciate this conception of a personality which upon extinction expands into the impersonal.

Here then is our picture of the Pudgalavādin doctrine of the self. But how reliable a picture is it? We have to bear in mind that what we have here is a reconstruction on the basis of limited and fragmentary evidence. Given the evidence, it seems to me to be a reasonable reconstruction, but I think it would be salutary at this point to recall the kind of evidence it is based on.

Our initial interpretation, that the *pudgala* is simply the five aggregates taken together as a conceptual whole which, as a whole, is not strictly reducible to the aggregates of which it consists, was based on a few passages in one of our Pudgalavādin sources, the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, and in Harivarman's *Tattvasiddhi*. We were also influenced by the explanation of the nature of the *pudgala* which the Pudgalavādin is represented as giving in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, although he denies that the *pudgala* is either conceptual or substantial. Our supposition at this stage was that the Pudgalavādins actually agreed with their opponents concerning the nature of the self, but disagreed with them concerning its status: whether it was "true and ultimate" or not, and (eventually) whether it was conceptual or substantial. Further passages from the Sarvāstivādin *Vijñānakāya*, the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra* and the *Tattvasiddhi* formed the basis for our explanation of the Pudgalavādins' insistence that the *pudgala* is "true and ultimate" even if conceptual: a *pudgala* which was merely conventional or fictitious could not, they felt, have the significance which the Buddha ascribed to it for morality and the operation of karma.

All of these passages seemed clear enough. But we found upon closer examination that two of the passages concerning the nature of the *pudgala* left room for another interpretation than the one we had arrived at, and the third, in the *Tattvasiddhi*, although unambiguous in Kumārajīva's Chinese translation, was probably as equivocal as the others in its lost original. This discovery, which opened the way to our later interpretation of the material, was also a reminder of the hazards facing us in dealing with translated texts. For all of our Pudgalavādin sources, and for many of our other sources as well, we have had to rely on translations, and translations from which in some cases it is hard to guess the meaning, not to mention the precise phrasing, of the original texts. I have tried not to base any part of the interpretation on passages that are dangerously obscure, but obviously, with material as difficult as this, there is always the possibility of error.

The most important evidence that our initial interpretation was wrong was the indescribability of the *pudgala* that has attained Parinirvana as either existent

or non-existent. That the *pudgala* in Parinirvana is indescribable in this sense does not seem to be stated explicitly in any of our Pudgalavādin sources. We have seen that in the *Kathāvatthu* the Pudgalavādin is represented as willing, at least initially, to say that the *pudgala* exists in Parinirvana, although he then denies that it is eternal, and he goes on to deny that it is annihilated even if it does not exist there. His position in this is certainly not very clear, if in fact he has a single position at all, but it seems to approximate the position noted above. After all, if the *pudgala* in Parinirvana is neither annihilated nor eternal, it surely cannot be said to exist there or not to exist in any usual sense.

The Pudgalavādin and his Theravādin opponent would have had in mind the various sutras in which the Buddha denies that the Tathāgata after death is either annihilated or eternal. That sutras of this kind were familiar to the Pudgalavādins is confirmed by the passage cited earlier from the *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtaviniścaya* (which seems to quote Pudgalavādin sources verbatim), a passage which is evidently based on such texts as the *Aggivacchagottasutta* and the "Upasīva-māṇavapucchā" in the *Suttanipāta*. These are texts which represent the Tathāgata in Parinirvana as beyond all categories of discourse, although they do not specifically say that he is indescribable as either existent or non-existent. But there are other sutras, in the *Avyākatasaṃyutta* (S iv 374–397, 401f.), which explicitly deny that the Tathāgata can be said to exist, not to exist, both to exist and not to exist, or neither to exist nor not to exist after death. It is reasonable to suppose that these sutras too would have been familiar to the Pudgalavādins.

One other piece of evidence may be worth considering, although until now I have mentioned it only in footnotes.[1] In the section of Bhavya's account of the Early Schools which is believed to derive from the Sāṃmitīya, he says that according to the Vātsīputrīyas, "Nirvana is not said either to exist or not to exist" (P5256, 68c6; P5640, 255c3). So here we have Nirvana described in the same terms as the *pudgala* in Parinirvana. If Nirvana and the *pudgala* are not really different from each other, that might seem reasonable enough. But according to our later interpretation, the reason that the *pudgala* cannot be said to be non-existent in Parinirvana is that Nirvana, which was always reflected (as it were) in the five aggregates as the *pudgala*, still exists when the aggregates do not; it is the existence of Nirvana that is the basis for denying that the *pudgala* is non-existent in Parinirvana. Moreover, as the uncreated *dharma* and as the ultimate truth (or reality) indicated by the third Noble Truth, Nirvana (one would have thought) could be assumed to exist. Even if the Pudgalavādins had denied the substantiality of the uncreated, as the Sautrāntikas did, it would be very strange

[1] See above, p. 106, n. 3 and p. 169, n. 2.

if they had refused to say that the uncreated existed while affirming the existence of a conceptual *pudgala* up to the time of its Parinirvana. Yet here we have the statement, from what is supposed to be a Pudgalavādin source, that Nirvana is not said either to exist or not to exist.

An explanation is suggested by another passage in Bhavya's *Tarkajvālā* to which we have already referred:[2]

> The Vātsīputrīyas say that [Nirvana] has the nature of both existence and non-existence; for as there is no body, faculty or thought in Nirvana, it is non-existence, but as the supreme, everlasting happiness is there, it is existence. (P5256, 38a5f.; Iida, 1980: 196)

So what is meant by the statement in the account of the Early Schools may be that Nirvana is not said to exist, because it is defined in terms of the absence of body, faculties and thought , and it is not said to be non-existent, because the everlasting happiness is ascribed to it. Logically, of course, to be neither existent nor non-existent is equivalent to both not existing and existing.

The crucial problem for our initial interpretation was thus an account of the *pudgala* in Parinirvana which the Pudgalavādins must surely have known and accepted even if it is not stated explicitly in any of our surviving Pudgalavādin sources. Our later interpretation was an attempt to explain the doctrine of the *pudgala* in a way that would be consistent with this account, and also, of course, with the evidence upon which our initial interpretation was based. The additional evidence for our new interpretation was primarily the analogy with fire as presented in several of our sources.

The analogy with fire was clearly important in a number of ways. In the first place, it seems to have been the Pudgalavādins' favourite analogy; there can be no doubt that they themselves thought it particularly appropriate to illuminate the nature of the self. In the second place, although it *could* perhaps be used to suggest the conceptual distinctness of the *pudgala* as a whole from the aggregates which according to our initial interpretation are its parts, it obviously serves much better to represent a *pudgala* that is supported by its aggregates but does not consist of them, just as a fire is supported by its fuel but does not consist of it. Furthermore, like the *pudgala*, a particular fire can be regarded as conceptual, inasmuch as it can be identified as that fire only by reference to its location and fuel, or as substantial, since fire is actually present in it, or even as neither, since it is not fire simply as it is in itself, nor the mere concept of fire, but an actual fire

[2] See above, p. 70.

supported by its fuel and definable only in terms of it. Finally, a fire that has vanished when its fuel is consumed can represent the *pudgala* that has attained final cessation in Parinirvana.

The analogy with fire is presented in our sources with only brief indications of how it applies to the *pudgala*. For a fuller understanding of what was intended, we had to turn to the early sutras which the passages in our sources were evidently meant to recall. That our later interpretation is based in part on these sutras is of course no disadvantage as long as we can be confident (and I think we can) that it was these or very similar sutras that the Pudgalavādins had in mind.

But we made use also of texts from the Brahmanical tradition. It was not of course my intention to suggest that the Pudgalavādins would have regarded these texts as authoritative, or that their doctrines were in any way based on them (except in the limited sense that the Vedic texts no doubt contributed to what people in ancient India, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, assumed the world to be like). The interpretation which I was proposing was not obviously Buddhist, and it could certainly have been questioned whether such an interpretation was even Indian. What these Brahmanical texts showed was that something similar to our later interpretation had in fact developed within one of the non-Buddhist Indian traditions. There too the individual self is like a particular fire arising as a kind of image of the one fire reflected in its fuel. That this was not an impossible conception of fire even within the Buddhist tradition was shown by the passages we noted in the *Milindapañha*, a non-Pudgalavādin work preserved by the Theravādins, and in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. Here again , I did not mean to suggest that the Pudgalavādins were actually influenced by the *Milindapañha* or the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*; I intended merely to establish that such a conception of fire could in fact appear in works which were undoubtedly Buddhist. None of these passages in any sense proves the rightness of our interpretation, but they do serve as evidence in support of its probability.

Our investigation of the various kinds of *prajñapti* had a similar purpose. We had assumed that the *pudgala* was conceptual in the sense that it was a whole formed of its constituent aggregates. Upon finding that there were serious difficulties with this assumption, we looked for some other kind of conceptual entity with which a non-composite *pudgala* might be identified. Since there was no discussion of the varieties of *prajñapti* (apart from the three concepts of the *pudgala*) in any of our Pudgalavādin sources, we turned to the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda, not to determine what the Pudgalavādins thought about concepts, but to discover something of the range of possibilities within Buddhism as a whole. If non-composite conceptual entities were in fact recognized in some of

the non-Pudgalavādin schools, it seemed correspondingly more likely that they could have been recognized also by the Pudgalavādins.

The non-composite conceptual entities which we found (the *tajjāpaññatti* and the *paṭibhāganimitta*) were both evidently something like images. That led us to ask whether the Pudgalavādins might have thought of the *pudgala* as a kind of image; and since the *pudgala* was publicly observable, the image would have to be not a mental image, but something more like a reflected image, the image in a mirror. But the evidence in support of this conjecture proved to be rather slight. A passage in one of the early sutras and passages in a number of Mahāyāna sutras showed that there was ample precedent within Buddhism for comparing the person to an image in a mirror, but there was nothing of the kind in any of our Pudgalavādin texts, and among all the critiques of the Pudgalavāda only one passage, in Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*, that made use of the analogy. Even there, Candrakīrti presented it as part of his own attack on the Pudgalavādins' position, and only then suggested that they might after all be willing to accept it. Still, the fact that he refers to the image in a mirror at all, and in this fashion, may indicate that this was indeed an analogy which the Pudgalavādins employed.

The comparison with a reflected image reappeared in our examination of the analogy with fire. We recognized that if fire is regarded as a single reality manifesting itself wherever the appropriate conditions are present, its multiple appearances will be like images, and the fuel supporting them, like so many mirrors reflecting its single being in a variety of locations. We noted a number of passages in Brahmanical texts in which both individual fires and persons were compared to reflected images; these were not, of course, intended to prove that the Pudgalavādins thought of fires and persons in this way, but to clarify the analogy (showing that in each case the image can be thought of as reflecting both the one reality and the particular basis for its appearance), and to establish that such an analogy was at any rate not unknown within the Indian tradition. It is true that there is nothing in our sources to indicate that the Pudgalavādins themselves did in fact think of the individual fire as like an image. But we know that they compared the *pudgala* to a fire, and it seems that they may also have compared the *pudgala* to a reflected image; that being the case, it is certainly possible that they thought of the individual fire also as like an image. But whether they did or not, we can recognize the usefulness of the analogy and employ it ourselves to illuminate the nature of the *pudgala* as we have understood it from our various sources. It is worth recalling in this connection that the *pudgala* can be identified only by reference to the aggregates which support it; similarly, an exact image can be distinguished from what it represents

only by reference to its location and the reflecting medium, such as a mirror, through which it appears.

We referred to the analogy with fire in order to clarify the relationship between Nirvana and the *pudgala*. The individual fire clearly corresponds to the *pudgala*; what corresponds to the one fire appearing or reflected in the individual fire is surely Nirvana. But there is of course no statement to that effect in any of our sources. Our conclusion derives simply from the analogy itself, interpreted in the light of what we have taken to be the Pudgalavādins' conception of Nirvana.

As we have seen, the analogy fits what the Pudgalavādins say about the *pudgala* in Parinirvana only if we assume something like the Brahmanical understanding of fire, according to which the particular fire is a local manifestation of a single, transcendent principle, the "one fire". And if the particular fire which when extinguished returns to the one fire is analogous to the *pudgala* which attains Parinirvana, it would seem that the one fire must correspond to Nirvana. But how confident can we be that the Pudgalavādins were fully aware of the implications of their analogy? Are we right in thinking that Nirvana as understood by the Pudgalavādins (or by Buddhists in general, for that matter) is the kind of thing that could be compared to the one fire? We have noted, of course, the simile in the *Milindapañha*, in which attaining Nirvana is compared to "attaining" fire, which is not stored up in any particular place, by rubbing two sticks together. But that is a comparison made in passing, as it were, to illustrate a particular point; it is not presented as the basis for a complete theory of the nature of Nirvana. It certainly shows that a Buddhist author could think of fire according to the Brahmanical model and use it as part of his explanation; what it does not indicate is the extent to which fire so conceived would have been thought of as analogous to Nirvana.

There is also the passage in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* in which the "eternal body" of the Buddha is compared to a fire that has gone out. The Buddha (in his eternal body) is identified with Nirvana, which is uncreated and therefore eternal. Here then we have a Buddhist work in which the person of the Buddha is understood to be a local manifestation of Nirvana as the particular fire is a manifestation of the one fire. But that such a conception was acceptable to the Mahāyāna, for whom neither the person nor Nirvana was in any case ultimately real, is not sufficient to establish that this is also how the Pudgalavādins understood it. We have to ask what other evidence we have that our interpretation, though it no doubt follows from the analogy, is one which the

Pudgalavādins would recognize, or at least find consistent with their own understanding of Nirvana.

The argument by which we arrived at our conclusion, that it is Nirvana that appears as the *pudgala*, depended on four points: first, that Nirvana exists and is not merely the absence of the *dharmas* which pass away when it is attained; secondly, that Nirvana is not wholly different from the *pudgala*; thirdly, that Nirvana already exists before the *pudgala* attains it and is thus neither a newly created *dharma* nor a transformation of the *pudgala*; and fourthly, that there is only one Nirvana, and not a separate Nirvana for each *pudgala* that attains it. If Nirvana were merely absence, the *pudgala* while it existed would somehow have to be a manifestation of that absence; but how could a *pudgala* supported by the five aggregates be a manifestation of their absence? Its Parinirvana, moreover, would be its annihilation. If Nirvana were wholly different from the *pudgala*, it is hard to imagine on what basis the *pudgala* could be considered its manifestation. Certainly if Nirvana were supposed to be the cause of the *pudgala*, it might be thought to manifest itself in its effect, and the effect, of course, need not be similar to its cause; but neither the Pudgalavādins nor any other Buddhists would think of Nirvana as a productive cause. If Nirvana came into being only when the *pudgala* attained it, it could not be manifested or reflected in the *pudgala* before that time, since it would not exist yet. This is to assume, of course, that Nirvana is manifested in the *pudgala* by being in some sense present in it; but if the *pudgala* were transformed into Nirvana, the *pudgala* might be thought of as foreshadowing its eventual state as a child may foreshadow the adult it will become. Whether one wants to say that the future thus exists in the present or not is no doubt a matter of philosophical taste. But in any case, unless there are to be many Nirvanas, the Nirvana attained by the Arhats will pre-exist their attainment of it, since it was previously attained by the Buddha. This brings us to the fourth point, that Nirvana must be single and common to all of the *pudgalas* that attain it; it must be the same Nirvana that is manifested in the various *pudgalas*.

These are the points, then, upon which our argument depends. How solid is the evidence in support of them? That the Pudgalavādins regarded Nirvana as something more than the mere non-existence of the *dharmas* which pass away when it is attained seems clear enough from a passage which we have already noted in the *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*:[3]

[3] See above, pp. 70, 180.

> When one gains Nirvana without residue [that is, Parinirvana], then the unshakeable happiness is attained. But if the person were eternal, it would have neither birth nor death, like Nirvana.... (T1649, 466a11f.)

It may be recalled that this passage is part of the Pudgalavādins' response to opponents who argue for the permanence of the person, citing a canonical verse: "None of the wise can fathom those who have attained the unshakeable happiness." The happiness is attained in Parinirvana; but the person, in the view of the Pudgalavādins certainly, does not persist (as a person) into Parinirvana. The unshakeable happiness is thus not to be located within the aggregates of the person, these having passed away; nor can it be something distinct from Nirvana and co-existing with it, since for the Pudgalavādins it is only Nirvana that is uncreated and therefore permanent. The unshakeable happiness, then, can hardly be anything but Nirvana itself.

Their opponents obviously believe that the unshakeable happiness is something that exists—otherwise it would have no bearing on the existence of the person in Parinirvana—and the Pudgalavādins reply by insisting on the mutability of the person, not by denying that the happiness is anything existent, as they might have done if they had been willing to argue that 'happiness' was simply a term for the tranquility of nothingness. Evidently the Pudgalavādins agree that the unshakeable happiness is something that exists in its own right, and it seems that in that case they must identify it with Nirvana.

This interpretation is confirmed by the passage which we have already noted in Bhavya's *Tarkajvālā*:[4]

> The Vātsīputrīyas say that [Nirvana] has the nature of both existence and non-existence; for as there is no body, faculty or thought in Nirvana, it is non-existence, but as the supreme, everlasting happiness is there, it is existence. (P5256, 38a5f.; Iida, 1980: 196)

In terms of the *dharmas* which have passed away, Nirvana is absence, non-existence; but in terms of the unshakeable happiness which belongs to it, or better, which pertains to its nature, it is something which exists. The happiness is here stated explicitly to be the reason for affirming Nirvana not only as the absence of the vanished aggregates, but also as a being in its own right.

That Nirvana is not wholly different from the *pudgala* is established by the passage in the *Kathāvatthu* in which the Pudgalavādin denies that the aggregates,

[4] See above, p. 70.

Nirvana and the *pudgala* are three entirely different things. This is confirmed by the statement in Bhavya's account of the Early Schools, that Nirvana is not said to be either the same as all *dharmas* or separate from them (P5256, 68c6; P5640, 255c3), together with the doctrine that the *pudgala* is neither the same as the aggregates nor separate from them: assuming that "all *dharmas*" here refers to the *dharmas* of the five aggregates, we can conclude that since Nirvana and the *pudgala* are both indeterminate in their relation to the aggregates, they must be either identical (which they are not) or else indeterminate also, neither the same nor separate, in their relation to each other. There can be no doubt, then, that the Pudgalavādins held that Nirvana is not wholly different from the *pudgala*.

That Nirvana already exists before it is attained follows from the first point, that it exists, and from the fact of its being uncreated: an uncreated *dharma*, if it exists at all, must always have existed. The Pudgalavādins identify Nirvana as the uncreated *dharma* (T1505, 9c26; T1506, 24a23), and as we have just seen, they speak of it as having neither birth nor death. Nirvana clearly pre-exists its attainment.

That there is only one Nirvana is stated in the *Sānfǎdù lùn*, Saṅghadeva's version of the *Tridharmakhaṇḍaka*:

> As [there are] four truths, why [did the Buddha] speak of the one [truth]? Because this is the ultimate; it means that there are not two Nirvanas. (T1506, 25a8)

This may seem to settle the matter. But it might be argued that all this means is that there are not two *kinds* of *dharma* which are Nirvana. There might still be as many Nirvanas as there are persons who attain them, even if all the Nirvanas are qualitatively identical. We speak, after all, of various occurrences of perception, for example, as occurrences of the same *dharma* without meaning to suggest that perception is numerically unique. Perhaps there *is* only one Nirvana, but only in the sense in which there is only one *dharma* called perception.

I see no way of proving that this is not what the Pudgalavādins meant; nevertheless, I think it is unlikely. To begin with, the passage which we have already noted in the *Udāna* in which Nirvana is compared to the ocean would make no sense if there were a separate Nirvana for each person who attains it: the point of the comparison, after all, is that Nirvana is not altered no matter how many people attain it, just as the ocean is not altered no matter how many rivers and showers pour into it. If there were a separate Nirvana for each person, the question of how Nirvana is affected by the number of people who attain it could

not even arise. It is true that we cannot be certain that the Pudgalavādins were familiar with this passage, but since versions of it appear elsewhere in the Pali Canon, in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (A iv 23) and the *Cullavagga* (CV 9.1.4), and also in the post-canonical *Milindapañha* (MP 319), it seems very likely that some form of it was included in their Tripiṭaka.

But in any case, it is hard to see what meaning can be attached to the statement that there is a separate Nirvana for each person who attains it. It is only by virtue of the five aggregates, of a particular body, particular feelings, perceptions, mental forces and consciousness, that one person can be distinguished from another; when all of these have passed away in Parinirvana, there is no longer anything personal that remains of the person, and so there is no longer anything outside of Nirvana itself by which one person's Nirvana could be distinguished from another's. But Nirvana itself is acknowledged to be qualitatively unique, and since it is non-spatial and eternal, it can hardly be anything but numerically unique also. It seems that once Parinirvana has been attained, there can no longer be a basis for distinguishing a plurality of Nirvanas. Before Parinirvana, we may certainly speak of this or that person's Nirvana. But as the Nirvana of each person is not different in itself from the Nirvana which remains after the aggregates have passed away, it follows that even while they exist, it is plural only in the sense that it is considered here in relation to this system of aggregates and there in relation to that. In itself it is simply Nirvana.

The four points upon which our argument depended were that Nirvana exists in its own right, that it is not wholly different from the *pudgala*, that it pre-exists its attainment, and that there is only one Nirvana and not a separate Nirvana for each *pudgala*. These have proved to be sufficiently well founded. We thus have good grounds for believing that our interpretation is one which the Pudgalavādins would at the very least have felt to be an acceptable representation of their position.

Conclusion

FOR over a thousand years, the Pudgalavādins maintained a tradition of interpretation which (if Kuījī and Paramārtha are correct) they traced back to Vacchagotta or Vātsīputra, the wanderer whose conversations with the Buddha, conversion and eventual realization of Nirvana are recorded in the Pali Canon, the *Saṃyuktāgama* in Chinese, and the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. They held that the self or *pudgala* is like a fire, supported by the five aggregates as fuel, always changing in the course of its journey through Samsara, and yet continuing as that particular being until with its fuel finally exhausted it vanishes into Nirvana, the unfathomable reality of which it was a manifestation. Such a self is no mere fiction, nor is it simply the aggregates themselves taken together as a whole; it is a being which partakes of the ultimacy of Nirvana, although in its dependence on the aggregates it has something of the elusive character of an image. The realization of its true nature, and of the nature and functioning of the aggregates upon which it depends, is the content of the Buddha's enlightenment; its reality is the basis for his compassion.

The Pudgalavādins regarded themselves as Buddhist, and not only Buddhist but orthodox, since they believed that their interpretation best represented the insight of the Buddha. But how Buddhist were they? Some of their opponents seem to have doubted whether they should be called Buddhist at all. Śāntarakṣita speaks of them as "some who consider themselves Buddhists" (TS 336a; DS ed. 159.5), and Prajñākaramati describes them as "*antaścaratīrthikāḥ*", "outsiders within [Buddhism]" (BCAP 9.60; Vaidya ed. 215.17). The implication, of course, is that even though they believed themselves to be Buddhists, the fact that they affirmed the reality of the self showed that they were not. If their chief doctrine was fundamentally inconsistent with the principles of Buddhism, then they were really not Buddhist, whatever they believed or said.

But on what basis do they (or we) define the principles of Buddhism? On the basis of the sutras, certainly, since these are as close as we can come to the actual words of the Buddha, but on the basis of the sutras as understood within a particular tradition: for the Theravādins, they are defined according to the Theravāda; for the Sarvāstivādins, according to the Sarvāstivāda, and so on. Each school regards itself as orthodox and the others as more or less heterodox. Where an issue is of any importance, each regards those that agree with it as

Buddhist, and the others as unbuddhist in that particular respect. All the schools that understand the Buddha to have taught the unreality of the self will naturally regard the Pudgalavādins as unbuddhist. But the Pudgalavādins will likewise consider the other schools unbuddhist in that same respect, in the belief that it is the other schools that have misinterpreted the sutras. Orthodoxy is clearly to a considerable extent a matter of one's point of view. It seems that every school of Buddhism may be said to be Buddhist, and even completely Buddhist, according to its own tradition.

Perhaps the question is in any case not one which we ought to be asking, at least as scholars. If we undertake to study Buddhism as a cultural phenomenon, our concern is certainly not only with those forms of Buddhism which are most "Buddhist" according to some particular criterion, but with all of its forms, whether they diverge widely from what we suppose to be the original Buddhism or not. Each of them is, after all, a form of Buddhism, and each contributes to the character of Buddhism as a whole. We may feel that the question of which of them is most truly Buddhist, though it may properly concern Buddhists as Buddhists, is one which ought not to concern us as scholars.

However, the fact that it is a question which properly concerns Buddhists makes it a question which we also ought to consider. If it is important for the Buddhist to try to determine the extent to which the various forms of Buddhism properly represent the teaching of the Buddha, it is also important for us as scholars to study how Buddhists of the various schools have tried to evaluate these representations. Moreover, we also have to try to determine their adequacy ourselves, not because the intrinsic value of a particular form of Buddhism necessarily depends on its soundness as a representation of the Buddha's teaching, but because a representation is what it was meant to be, and so to understand what it is, we also have to understand it as a representation. The intrinsic value of a portrait may similarly have little to do with its quality as a likeness; but if part of the artist's intention was in fact to render a good likeness of the subject, it is certainly in order for us to ask whether it is a good likeness or not. Each school of Buddhism constitutes a tradition of interpretation, and it is reasonable for us to ask how adequate the interpretation is in each case, just as in studying a commentary we want to know how satisfactorily it explains the work it belongs to.

Any detailed evaluation of the Pudgalavāda is beyond the scope of this book. But this question of the extent to which the Pudgalavāda should be regarded as Buddhist, the extent, that is, to which the Pudgalavāda may be understood as properly representing the teaching of the Buddha, is one which admits at least of

some general observations. To begin with, we have already noted that the difficulty which we and the Pudgalavādins' Buddhist opponents have in accepting the Pudgalavāda as a form of Buddhism comes from its apparent denial of the doctrine which above all distinguishes Buddhism from other religions and philosophies: the doctrine of non-self. How are we to consider Buddhist a form of Buddhism which has abandoned the defining doctrine of Buddhism?

Two points need to be made here. In the first place, our opinion about what constitutes the defining doctrine of Buddhism is based primarily on our knowledge of the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna, these being forms of Buddhism which have survived and whose traditions are thus readily accessible; and of course neither teaches the reality of the self. The only other early school of Buddhism of which we have extensive knowledge is the Sarvāstivāda, whose position on the nature of the self is very close to the Theravāda's. When we look at the early sutras, we naturally see them through the tradition of the Theravāda and, to a lesser extent, the Sarvāstivāda. Moreover, all the non-Buddhist traditions that affirm the reality of the self have seen in Buddhism those doctrines which differentiate it most clearly from themselves; from their standpoint also, then, it is above all the doctrine of non-self that defines Buddhism as what it is. Any interpretation of Buddhism that affirms the self thus seems to go against the evidence of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions. But of course the Pudgalavādins themselves formed an important part of the Buddhist tradition, and their view of the self has to be taken into account when we consider what it is to be Buddhist.

The second point is that the Pudgalavādins did not actually reject the doctrine of non-self; they interpreted it according to their own understanding of what the Buddha intended. While the other schools denied the existence of the self in any way except as a useful (if dangerous) fiction, the Pudgalavādins denied the existence of the self as anything either identical with the aggregates or different from them. In their view, all *dharmas* (including Nirvana) are non-self, and there is no self to be found that is separate from these. They would agree that the doctrine of non-self is one of the defining doctrines of Buddhism, since it indicates the true nature of the self and so distinguishes the Buddhist position from those of the eternalists on the one hand and the annihilationists (or materialists) on the other; and they would argue that it is their interpretation of this doctrine which properly conveys the intention of the Buddha.

Certainly it is to the early sutras that the Pudgalavādins refer when they try to establish the soundness of their position; they are unquestionably Buddhist in

the sense that there is no non-Buddhist authority to which they appeal. But the arguments also which they offer in support of their particular interpretation of the sutras are based on fundamental Buddhist principles. They maintain that the self is indeterminate in its relation to the five aggregates because it is only such an indeterminate self (if there is a self at all) that can be said to be neither eternal nor annihilated, and it is only for such a self that the way of purity (*brahmacarya*) can have meaning. They argue that it is only in terms of such a self that the law of karma is comprehensible, for merit and demerit are defined in relation to the sentient beings that receive benefit or harm, not in relation to clusters of inanimate, momentary *dharmas*. And it is only toward the sentient being, susceptible to joy and sorrow, bondage and liberation, that a monk may cultivate limitless good will and a Buddha direct his inexhaustible compassion. What is appropriate to the *dharmas* upon which the self depends is only the indifference necessary for renunciation.

The Pudgalavādins in fact thought of their doctrine as the true Middle Path taught by the Buddha: the self is neither eternal, as it would be if it were independent of the aggregates, nor subject to annihilation, as it would be if it were identical with them. They accordingly distinguished three wrong views concerning the self: that it is the same as the aggregates, that it is different from them, and that it does not exist. Denying its existence would no doubt seem in their view to be much the same as identifying it with the aggregates. We cannot avoid using the term 'self', but if we can only use it in relation to the aggregates, then in the absence of any real self, the aggregates are all that is left for the term to refer to. It is natural then to indicate the non-existence of the self by saying that the self is really nothing but the aggregates; and that is surely equivalent to saying that the aggregates (or some portion of the aggregates) are the self.

The other schools of course held that the self does exist, but only conventionally; as an entity, it is composite and thus conceptual and unreal. The Theravādins, Sarvāstivādins and Sautrāntikas, at least, would not acknowledge as real anything which is composite; since they believed the "self" to be simply the five aggregates taken together as a whole, it could only be conceptual. The Pudgalavādins seem to have understood the self to be something simple which appears only on the basis of the aggregates and is thus inseparable from them; they were willing (for a time, at least) to say that it was conceptual, and yet maintained also that it was "true and ultimate".

For the other schools, that the self, whether simple or not, was neither the same as the aggregates nor different from them showed clearly that it was unreal. It was not simply that it was dependent; all of the created *dharmas*, which most

of these schools held to be real, were likewise dependent on their causes and conditions. That a *dharma* depended on something else would not have to imply any lack of integrity; it was what it was, absolutely distinct from its cause and conditions. But something indeterminate in its relation to other things could not be simply what it was, since it was not wholly different from what it depended on. And something not simply and purely itself was surely unreal.

This criterion for reality was evidently widely accepted among Buddhist schools. It is on the basis of this criterion that the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins would limit ultimate truth to the created and uncreated *dharmas*, all the rest of what there is being only conventional, that the Vijñānavādins would limit it to the "perfected nature" (*parinispannasvabhāva*), the "real thusness" (*bhūtatathatā*) in which both perceiver and perceived, self and *dharmas*, are absent, and that the Mādhyamikas try to show that nothing at all, whether existent or non-existent, can be ultimately real. So for the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins, the ultimate truth or reality consists of *dharmas*, while the *pudgala* and similarly composite or relational entities are relegated to conventional truth; for the Mahāyāna (and, it seems, some of the Mahāsānghika schools as well) all entities, whether *dharmas* or *pudgalas*, are conceptual and thus merely conventional, and the ultimate truth, whether thought of as the mere absence of self-identical entities or as the reality in which they are absent, is indescribable, though its nature can be indicated by terms such as 'emptiness' and 'thusness'. But for the Pudgalavādins, there are three kinds of truth, and although Nirvana is the ultimate truth, the created *dharmas* and their characteristics, which constitute characteristical truth, are not merely conventional. The *pudgala*, moreover, is also "true and ultimate", and seems to have a share in all three of the truths: in practical truth, as the being who may be described in terms of behaviour and function; in characteristical truth, as the being who is supported by the created *dharmas*; and in ultimate truth, as the being who has passed away in Parinirvana. The ontology of the Pudgalavādins may thus be more complex than that of most of the other schools, but hardly less Buddhist, inasmuch as the whole structure seems to represent an attempt to give due weight to all of the various utterances of the Buddha.

As noted earlier, to identify the ultimately true with what is determinate, as the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins do, to identify it, that is, with *dharmas* which are simply themselves and different from everything else, is to make logical consistency a fundamental criterion for reality. If something is not simply itself, if it is somehow more than itself or other than itself, it fails in any strict sense to be self-identical. Their conviction—and it can hardly be thought

an unreasonable one—is that whatever is not self-identical, being essentially self-contradictory, cannot really exist. Entities such as the *pudgala*, which they take to be simply conceptual groupings of real *dharmas*, are indeterminate in relation to their constituents precisely because they are the constituents themselves (they are not something different from their constituents) taken not individually but collectively (they are not exactly the same as their constituents). There is never anything but the *dharmas* in reality, but we create the appearance of further entities by grouping them in various ways. The indeterminacy of such conceptual entities, the fact that in this limited sense[1] they are not amenable to logic, is the mark of their unreality.

The ontology of the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins thus seems to be rational; that of the Pudgalavādins, with their insistence on the truth and ultimacy of an indeterminate entity, to be impossible to defend on rational grounds. The Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins may accordingly seem more Buddhist inasmuch as Buddhist doctrine is supposed to be based on what was actually observed by the Buddha and to assert only what is consistent with that. In the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, for example, the Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivādins are represented as arguing for the existence of past and future *dharmas* on the basis of both scriptural authority and reason (AKB 5.25; DS ed. 804f.); they are evidently confident that what the Buddha taught will as a matter of course be logically consistent. In principle, whatever was taught by the Buddha can be verified by our own observations and rational reflection on what we have observed. Now our activity in grouping the *dharmas* into conceptual entities can be observed, but the conceptual entities themselves cannot be observed as anything apart from the *dharmas*. But the Pudgalavādins will argue that we observe persons as well as *dharmas*, and they deny that the *pudgala* is reducible to the *dharmas* upon which it depends. The Buddha spoke of persons not simply for the sake of convenience, but because the Four Noble Truths would be meaningless without recognition of the persons who suffer and may eventually attain release. *Dharmas* can neither suffer nor attain Parinirvana.

For the Pudgalavādins, the person is true and ultimate, and necessarily so if the meaningfulness of the Buddha's teaching depends on it. Its indeterminacy is certainly acknowledged, but since as far as they are concerned its truth and ultimacy is already established, its indeterminacy cannot be taken as a criterion by which to judge its status. They can only conclude that some things that are true and ultimate are determinate and others are not. If the nature of those that are

[1] It *is* a limited sense, for although groups are indeterminate in relation to their own members, they are not indeterminate in relation to most other groups and *their* members. In this way they are not only amenable to logic; they are the very stuff of logical discourse. What are these groups, after all, but sets?

indeterminate is to that extent beyond the scope of rational discourse, then (we may imagine them saying) so much the worse for reason. The teaching of the Buddha is indeed based on observation, and what is observed is that the person exists *and* is indeterminate in its relation to the aggregates; the limitation of reason with regard to the person is thus (they would say) an observed fact. We should not reject what is actually observed because it fails to conform to a purely rational criterion.

It is interesting to note that some of the non-Pudgalavādin Buddhists also were willing to accept indeterminacy when there seemed to be no alternative. According to the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, the activity (作用 *zuòyòng*, *kāritra*) which distinguishes the present *dharma* from the same *dharma* when past or future is neither the same as the own-being (*svabhāva*) of that *dharma* (that is, the *dharma* itself) nor different from it (T1545, 394c5). The same doctrine appears in Saṅghabhadra's *Nyāyānusāra* (T1562, 633a24–b5). It is true that the activity is not claimed to be something real; but neither can it be merely a convenient way of talking about what is real, for it is only its presence or absence that determines the temporal status of the real *dharma* to which it belongs. This indeterminate *kāritra* is thus crucial to the defence of the Sarvāstivādin position.

The Mādhyamikas, as we have already observed, apply the same criterion for reality as the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins, but conclude that even the created and uncreated *dharmas* have only conceptual existence. Everything, whether simple or composite, is definable only in relation to other things, and so cannot be either wholly different from them, since what it is defined as includes what they are, or identical with them, since they are, after all, things other than itself. According to the criterion of strict self-identity, then, there is no reality at all. And if it is exclusively the real that constitutes ultimate truth, then everything that we can conceive of, whether simple or composite, created or uncreated, is merely conventional.

But if according to the Mādhyamikas there is in this sense no reality (although there is certainly "*tattva*", the state of affairs in which there is no reality), it is then the "unreal" which actually functions in the world and so for practical purposes has to be taken seriously.[2] If something were real according to the criterion of self-identity, if it had *svabhāva*, it would not be related to anything else and thus could not function at all, even as an object of knowledge. It is precisely the unreal, whose nature is indeterminate and to that extent paradoxical, that forms the whole content of Buddhist teaching and practice. (The ultimate truth, which in the absence of anything real is the emptiness or

[2] See VV 70; MMK 24.14, PPMV 500f.

unreality of everything, can be indicated and recognized, but cannot really be conceived or expressed.) For all practical purposes, then, it is the unreal that constitutes reality; what was supposed to be the real, the self-identical, is nowhere to be found (except in the universal equivalence of the unreal).

For the Mādhyamikas, both the self and the *dharmas* that support it, although indeterminate and so (according to the criterion of self-identity) ultimately unreal, have conventional or functional existence. The Vijñānavādins similarly deny the reality of both self and *dharmas* while recognizing their conventional existence as the forms in which the transformations of consciousness are misapprehended. The Pudgalavādins affirm both self and *dharmas* as "true and ultimate", but acknowledge (and indeed insist) that the self is indeterminate. The Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins deny that the self exists ultimately, but are careful to affirm its conventional existence, its existence for practical purposes. The various schools differ concerning the exact nature of the self and its ontological status, but they all agree that it is indeterminate in its relation to the aggregates, and assign to it at least a kind of functional reality. It is this doctrine of the indeterminacy of the self, rather than any particular ontological interpretation of it, that is common to all forms of Buddhism and distinguishes them from most if not all of the non-Buddhist traditions. If there is a single defining doctrine of Buddhism, it is thus not the doctrine of non-self, at least as understood by the Theravādins and other non-Pudgalavādin schools, but the doctrine of the indeterminate self.

Why did a significant portion of the early Buddhist community hold that this indeterminate self exists as something not merely conventional but true and ultimate? The simple answer, of course, is that that is what they understood the Buddha to have taught, and what accordingly they understood to be the truth. But then why did they interpret the Buddha's teaching as they did? One possibility is that the founders of the Pudgalavāda were influenced by some of the non-Buddhist traditions which taught the reality of the self. Such an influence might be difficult to avoid, particularly among converts to Buddhism from those traditions; and in the first few centuries, while Buddhism was expanding rapidly, many of the monks must have been converts. One might expect, then, that forms of Buddhism would develop which were based on the remembered teachings of the Buddha, but only as understood according to the outlook of the non-Buddhist traditions. These would be schools which were only nominally Buddhist: Buddhist in their acceptance of the sutras, but unbuddhist in their interpretation of them.

The difficulty with this explanation is that we have no way, as far as I can see, of establishing the extent of such an influence, or even whether it actually occurred. The plausibility of the explanation, such as it is, depends on several assumptions. The first is that many of the early converts to Buddhism would have been significantly influenced in their understanding of the doctrine by the non-Buddhist doctrines to which they had formerly adhered. The second is that the doctrine of the unreality of the self is indeed what the Buddha actually taught. The third is that the record of his teaching in the sutras is unambiguous, so that minds unprejudiced by any previous non-Buddhist indoctrination could be counted on, with suitable instruction at least, to interpret it correctly. But none of these is by any means certain. That some of the converts to Buddhism would have been influenced by their non-Buddhist backgrounds seems likely, but we know little if anything about how many of them had followed another tradition in any formal sense, and little also about the thoroughness of their instruction in Buddhist doctrine. That such an influence was a significant factor in the development of Buddhism is no more than a guess, though I think a fairly reasonable one. The second assumption, that what the Buddha actually taught was the unreality of the self, would be reasonable if the third assumption were sound, that the record of his teaching is unambiguous. But we have already seen enough of the early sutras in the course of this study to know that it is not; it can seem unambiguous only if we apply the interpretation of a particular school with an unswerving determination to make it fit. That being the case, we have to admit that we do not know what the Buddha taught, and that the record will support more than one interpretation. How then can we judge how any of his followers were influenced in their understanding of his teaching, if indeed they *were* influenced? It is entirely possible that the Buddha taught the reality of the self, and that a significant portion of the converts to his doctrine had been followers of one or another of the materialistic, "annihilationist" traditions and misunderstood the doctrine accordingly. It is even possible (though surely not very likely) that what he actually taught was different from what has been handed down in any of the Buddhist schools, all of his followers having misunderstood his teaching in consequence of their non-Buddhist backgrounds. (It might be suggested that Śāriputra, at least, understood his teaching, since the Buddha's endorsement of his explanations is on record.[3] But that may indicate only that the explanations were known to be Śāriputra's rather than the Buddha's, and the Buddha's endorsement may be only a symbol of the reciter's conviction that the explanations are nevertheless orthodox.)

[3] See the *Sevitabbāsevitabbasutta*, M iii 45–61. There is a similar endorsement of Mahākātyāyana's understanding in the *Mahākaccānabhaddekarattasutta*, M iii 192–199.

We need to recall also that the Pudgalavādin doctrine of the indeterminate self is different from almost all of the non-Buddhist doctrines which might be supposed to have influenced it. It is only certain passages in the Upanishads and certain traditions of their interpretation that resemble what I have proposed as the real position of the Pudgalavāda, and even then there is the important distinction that what the Vedāntins regard as a supreme self is for the Pudgalavādins (as for most other Buddhists) something devoid of self. Moreover, my interpretation of the Pudgalavāda was based at least as much on sutra passages as on texts of the Pudgalavāda; if there was an influence from the Upanishadic tradition, it must have made itself felt very early, while the sutras were still in the process of being formed. It is certainly possible that there were groups within the early monastic community which, consciously or unconsciously, incorporated Upanishadic elements into the remembered teachings of the Buddha; but it is no less likely, I think, that what we now perceive as akin to the Upanishads in the sutras was not added to them during their formation, but was rather an integral part of the Dharma which the Buddha realized and taught. If that was the case, there was no *influence* of the Upanishads (unless we want to suppose, against the entire tradition, that the Buddha himself was influenced by Upanishadic doctrines), but a limited affinity between the Buddha's Dharma and some parts of the Upanishads. The Pudgalavādins would then not be nominal Buddhists who were influenced by non-Buddhist traditions, but real Buddhists who developed a doctrine of the self which was already present in the Buddha's teaching.

This obviously is not to affirm that the Pudgalavādin doctrine of the self (or something like it) was actually taught by the Buddha, but only that we should not assume that it was not. The fact is that we do not know what the Buddha taught. Since the record of his teachings was somewhat ambiguous, there was room (and perhaps a need) for a number of interpretations, a number of schools. We have no basis, as far as I can see, for assuming that any of the schools arose as a result of non-Buddhist influence, though some of them may have. But we can still ask why, in terms of the Buddhist tradition itself, the Pudgalavādins chose to interpret the sutras as they did.

We have already noted some of the considerations which seem to have been influential with them. Without a real self, they believed, the operation of karma would be inexplicable, and the cultivation of benevolence toward other selves and the Buddha's compassion in teaching them would be deluded if not actually meaningless. The profound humanity which is surely an essential feature of Buddhism would be without any ultimate foundation.

But there is another consideration, never explicitly indicated in our sources, which we can guess from the way in which the *pudgala* is defined in relation to the aggregates and Nirvana. The self or *pudgala* constitutes the link between the created *dharmas* of the five aggregates and the uncreated *dharma* Nirvana. The five aggregates are impermanent and of the nature of suffering. Nirvana, the uncreated *dharma*, is permanent and of the nature of happiness. They seem to have nothing in common. If the person were simply the five aggregates taken together, there would be no meaningful sense in which the person could attain Nirvana: even if Nirvana could be known and enjoyed, the knowledge and enjoyment of it would pass away with the aggregates at death. The continuing existence of Nirvana would mean nothing to the person who, having "attained" it, was annihilated in Parinirvana. To say that there never was any real person and so there is no real annihilation is cold comfort at best; it does not alter the fact that if we consist solely of the five aggregates, the permanence of Nirvana when we have passed away is absolutely irrelevant to us. Once the aggregates have vanished, Nirvana may exist, but it does not exist for us. And if the attainment of Nirvana is thus impermanent, then whatever the happiness it affords us while we live, it too is ultimately *duḥkha*, suffering.

But if the person is not the five aggregates but rather Nirvana itself reflected in them, the person links Nirvana and Samsara as the image by which the one appears on the basis of the other. To attain Nirvana is then not to establish a necessarily temporary relationship with something alien to oneself, but to realize what one has been from the beginning. One might be tempted to think of this as realizing one's true self, since the true nature of one's selfhood is what is realized, except that Nirvana is devoid of most of the characteristics of a self. The self is a finite reflection of the infinite; the true nature of the self, that of which the self is an appearance, is thus not self but selflessness.

It is in the person of the Buddha, the Tathāgata, that the essential identity of the self with Nirvana is made actual. In him Nirvana has become present; the calmness, compassion and beauty which others experience in his person are qualities or aspects of Nirvana itself. All selves are embodiments of the selfless, but in him the selfless has been realized, and his person, although still represented by the aggregates, by his body, feelings and so on, has become infinite. Even while he is alive, there is in a sense no Tathāgata to be found. And yet it is this selflessness, this boundless presence in and around the aggregates, which identifies him as the Tathāgata.

One wonders whether there might have been some basis in the meditative experience of the Pudgalavādins for their doctrine of the self. On the whole, what

we know of their meditative practice is not greatly different from what is to be found in the other schools. But there is one bit of evidence which, though far from compelling, may in fact indicate a practice peculiar to the Pudgalavāda. It is in a late source, Bu ston's history of Buddhism. We are told that before his conversion to the Mahāyāna, the great epistemologist and logician Dignāga studied with a Vātsīputrīya (who according to the later account of Tāranātha was named Nāgadatta).[4] The Vātsīputrīya instructed him to seek the indescribable self; but even after the most elaborate investigation, Dignāga was unable to find it. The Vātsīputrīya, feeling that Dignāga's confession of failure was really an implicit criticism of his doctrine, thereupon dismissed him.[5]

It is entirely possible, of course, that this story merely reflects non-Pudgalavādin assumptions about the kind of practice the Pudgalavāda would lead to. On the other hand, the story in the Pali Vinaya about the Buddha's suggestion to the young men looking for the woman who had absconded with some of their possessions, that they might better look for the self (MV 1.14.3) could have been taken by the Pudgalavādins as authority for a specific meditative practice by which the self could be identified and comprehended. But we have to recognize in any case that even if the meditative practice of the Pudgalavādins was in fact no different from that of the other schools, they would still interpret their experience according to their own doctrine, and would naturally take it as evidence supporting and confirming that doctrine.

Moreover, there is a sense in which all forms of Buddhism encourage us to seek the self, even if not explicitly, for it is only when we inquire into the nature of the self that we discover its indeterminacy. And by realizing the indeterminacy of the self we gain release, in the non-Pudgalavādin schools through insight into its illusoriness, and in the Pudgalavāda through the recognition that it is nothing that can be isolated and made the basis for desire and attachment. In both cases it is only by seeking the self that we can uncover our primordial misunderstanding of what it is.

We have already noted the similarity of this doctrine of an individual self whose ultimate nature is the infinite to the doctrine of the self in the Upanishads; they differ, of course, in their interpretation of the infinite, the Upanishads representing it as a supreme self, whereas for the Pudgalavādins it is Nirvana, which is selfless. But it should not be thought that its affinities are exclusively non-Buddhist. It is reminiscent also of the Mahāyāna doctrine of the *tathāgata-garbha*, the embryo of the Tathāgata. Here too the ultimate nature of the sentient being is Nirvana, for everything is empty, and emptiness is the character of

[4] Tāranātha, 102.4; tr. Lama Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, 1981: 181.

[5] Bu ston, 847.3–7; tr. Obermiller, 1932: 149.

Nirvana; every sentient being, whether enlightened or not, is thus in principle identical with Nirvana. The enlightenment of the Buddha is nothing apart from its content, and its content is simply this emptiness, identical with Nirvana, of the sentient being and all *dharmas*. The Buddha differs from other beings only in having fully realized his essential emptiness, the enlightenment already inherent within him. What he is actually, all sentient beings are potentially; and to the extent that the nature of the Buddha may be identified with enlightenment and Nirvana, they all have within them the nature of the Buddha. Thus the Tathāgata is already present within each, as an embryo is present within the womb.

Another doctrine within the Buddhist tradition to which it bears some resemblance is that of the "storehouse consciousness" (*ālayavijñāna*) of the Vijñānavādins. The storehouse consciousness is an eighth consciousness from which the other seven, those of visual, aural, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, intellectual and volitional experience, proceed according to the influence of karma. It is the appropriator of (what appears to be) the physical body and its sense organs, and is continuous through the successive lives of a sentient being, coming to an end only when Nirvana has been attained. It is misapprehended by the unenlightened as a real self. Its relation to the other seven consciousnesses and the world of apparent *dharmas* which they project is indeterminate. In its true nature it is not any finite being, but rather the "real thusness" which we know as Nirvana, beginningless and intrinsically pure, and neither the same as all *dharmas* nor different from them.

For both the Pudgalavāda and the Mahāyāna, then, Nirvana is already within the self (or "self") as its true nature. For each, the person is important not only as a being whose suffering is at least functionally real, but also as the embodiment of Nirvana, which is the ultimate goal. To that extent, both can be seen as affirming the value of the sentient being. And we have already seen that the Pudgalavādins were concerned to establish a basis for the cultivation of good will toward other beings and for the Buddha's compassion. Could they have been impelled to insist on the reality of the person because of something comparable to our Western sense of the ultimate value of the individual being?

But there are different senses in which we may affirm the value of the individual being. In the first place, we may suppose that individuals are of more fundamental importance than the communities which are composed of them, that the Sangha in fact derives its value from its members. The Sangha deserves our respect because the individuals who compose it deserve our respect, and because it supports the effort of these individuals to attain Nirvana. For it is after all the individual that attains Nirvana, not the Sangha as a whole. Now it seems likely

that the Pudgalavādins did in fact affirm the value of the individual in this sense; but then so did the other schools as well. And those who denied that the person was anything more than a system of aggregates could still affirm the importance of the individual system in relation to the Sangha as a community of such systems.

Or again, we may suppose that the individual being deserves greater care and concern than the evanescent *dharmas* upon which it depends; the value of the individual would thus transcend that of its associated *dharmas*. Since the Pudgalavādins did in fact argue that there would be no basis for the cultivation of good will toward other beings if the individual being were either non-existent or reducible to the aggregates, we can be confident that they affirmed the value of the individual being in this sense.

Or again, we may suppose that if there is some aspect of the individual being that may be identified with something of supreme value, the individual will share in that value. The sense of something appearing in the person that goes beyond the limitations of the aggregates and that is free of the suffering which is their nature as impermanent *dharmas* would lead us to recognize the value of every person even as we recognize it in the person of the Buddha. The Pudgalavādins' reverence for the Buddha as one in whom the nature of Nirvana was manifest, and their recognition that Nirvana was in some sense latent within every person, may certainly have led them to affirm the value of the individual being, in whom that highest value is at least obscurely present as the unlimited reality of which the person is a limited appearance or reflection. But what they affirmed in this way would be the ultimate value of something either latent or manifest in the individual being rather than the value of the individual being as such.

Finally, we may suppose that the individual being has intrinsic valuc, apart from the value of that infinite reality of which we understand it to be an appearance. To affirm the value of the individual being in its own right is to say that it is better for it to exist than not to exist. But that would be to say that Nirvana "with residue" is better than Nirvana without, that it would have been better for the Buddha not to have attained Parinirvana. In fact if the person is to be thought of as vanishing as soon as its true, infinite nature is realized, as Kuījī seems to indicate, should we not suppose that it would have been better for the Buddha not to have attained enlightenment at all? No, for we can ascribe intrinsic value to the individual being and still ascribe greater value to Nirvana; it would be appropriate then to sacrifice the one for the sake of the other. But if the Buddha is thought of as still in some sense a person, even if one no longer definable in

terms of the motives and aspirations of selfhood, surely Nirvana together with the individuality in which it is realized (both having intrinsic value) is of even greater value than Nirvana alone when the individuality has passed away in Parinirvana.

But we may be in danger here of thinking of Nirvana as a kind of constituent of the person, bringing its own transcendent value to the being in which it appears, while the person's other constituents, the five aggregates, contribute the value that we are ascribing to individual existence. It then seems to make sense to assume, as we have just done, that there are two kinds of value in the person, the one deriving from the part which transcends individuality, and the other from those parts by which individuality is conferred. But as we now understand the Pudgalavādin position, neither Nirvana nor the aggregates can be considered parts of the person. The person is Nirvana itself as it appears on the basis of the aggregates. What is reflected in a mirror is after all not a constituent of the image; it appears there as the entire image. And the mirror itself is not a constituent of the image; it is merely that which the image depends on. A fire likewise does not consist of the one fire together with its fuel; it consists wholly of the one fire, and is merely supported by its fuel.

The Pudgalavādins accordingly deny that the person is ever annihilated. The person may last only until the time of becoming a Buddha, but it does not become non-existent in Buddhahood, nor in Parinirvana. According to our current interpretation, the reality which appeared as the person on the basis of the aggregates continues to exist when the aggregates have passed away; what the person was in reality remains after the vanishing of its appearance. In that sense we can say that the loss of the person in Parinirvana is no less illusory than its apparent identity with the aggregates. It would seem that whatever was real and thus of value in the individual being is retained in its Parinirvana.

But this is to reduce the value of the individual being to that of the reality of which it is an appearance; and that the Pudgalavādins regarded the individual as of value in that sense we have already acknowledged. Our question here is whether the appearance itself has intrinsic value: is it better for Nirvana to appear in the form of a person or not, to be manifest as a sentient being or to be unmanifest in Parinirvana? And at this point perhaps we should ask another question: if it is better in the one case than in the other, for whom is it better? For the one who has attained enlightenment and release? Or for the rest of us who are still struggling in Samsara? The view of the Pudgalavādins, like that of most other Buddhists, would seem to have been that the existence of the Buddha, and of all who have made real progress upon the Path, is of course of immense value

for other beings, but that for the one who has attained Nirvana it is actually better to pass away, never to be reborn, than to continue to exist even as an individual who has transcended individuality. One's existence as an individual being may thus indeed have value for others, but only as instrumental to their own attainment of what has ultimate value, Nirvana in its purity, "without residue", unmanifest.

We may recall that the image of fire is used not only to represent the individual self, but also to express the character of desire and suffering. Fire is after all restless and appetitive; so too is the self. Nirvana, as the ultimate value, is represented not by the fire blazing and crackling before us, but by the fire extinguished, "gone home" to its timeless essence. And that essence may be thought of either as darkness and coolness or as infinite light; but it cannot be conceived as a fire actually burning.

We have to bear in mind that the belief to which we incline in the West that the world and the individual have intrinsic value is at least partly an inheritance from Judaism and Christianity. In India too, as long as the world and the self are thought of as the creations of a supreme being, their value can be held to be established by the mere fact of their having been worth creating. But when they are regarded as the creations only of primordial error, when the highest good is in no way implicated in their production, there is no longer any necessity to assume their value. If they are of the nature of suffering (and whatever is less than the highest good is suffering), and if Nirvana exists and can be attained, then the course of wisdom is obviously to abandon both the world and the self and to seek Nirvana. It is only in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism that Samsara is identified with Nirvana, so that the world and the sentient being can be affirmed, not indeed as they appear to us, but as they actually are according to the insight of the Buddha. For it is through the identification of Samsara with Nirvana that the infinite can be seen as constituting the finite and the finite as in turn constituting the infinite. "Form is emptiness and emptiness itself is form." But as far as we can judge from the available evidence, the Pudgalavādins regarded Nirvana as at least relatively distinct from Samsara, related to it through the person as the content of an image is to the mirror in which it appears. They accordingly sought not only the realization of Nirvana in this life, but also the unshakeable happiness that is to be attained with the final extinction of the aggregates in Parinirvana.

And yet there is something more to be said. The self that is abandoned with the realization of Nirvana is in essence the same as what has been attained: the self *is* Nirvana reflected in the five aggregates. And one whose self has been

realized in the selfless, whose finite being has been realized as in substance the infinite, should be no longer able to distinguish the value of his own individual existence for himself from its value for those other beings who may recognize the nature of Nirvana and the possibility of its attainment in his radiant presence; for it is the same entity which is reflected obscurely in their persons and brilliantly in his own. They and he are in fact neither the same nor different. The clarification of Nirvana in the being of others must be of no less value to the Buddha than its complete realization in himself. He passes at death from Nirvana "with residue", Nirvana still reflected in the system of his aggregates, to Parinirvana, Nirvana "without residue", not as an affirmation of the superiority of Parinirvana, but (as the Pudgalavādins would understand it) as the natural consequence of his realization of the ultimate selflessness of his selfhood. The value of the Buddha's personal existence while he lives is precisely that of the inconceivable reality to which he passes in death: the value of Nirvana.

The value of the individual existence of the Arhat will not be different in principle from that of the Buddha, either for himself or for others; the reality that is manifest in both is the same, though in the Buddha it no doubt shines even more brilliantly than in the Arhat. And the value of other beings, *pudgalas* bound in the realm of Samsara, will also be that of Nirvana, although its manifestation in them may be obscure indeed. But the infinite happiness and tranquillity of Nirvana is as though concealed within them, and may be felt as a dim presence of which even the faintest glimpse is a source of wonder.

For the person as conceived by the Pudgalavāda is surely a being of mystery and wonder. As fire is manifest in the particular fire burning before us, a timeless reality shining forth in the ever changing flames that consume its fuel, so the infinite tranquillity of Nirvana appears in the ever changing forms of the sentient being, shimmering within the narrow stream of evanescent *dharmas* which support our individuality. And these *dharmas*, our physical form, our feelings, perceptions, mental forces and consciousness, constitute a world apparently quite different from Nirvana, though linked to it by the *pudgala* through which it appears on their basis: these are not the essenceless, transparent *dharmas* of the Mahāyāna, but *dharmas* which as far as we can judge are supposed to be distinct and limited, each with its own *svabhāva*, like the created *dharmas* of the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda. In the midst of the torrent of these *dharmas*, these finite, fleeting phenomena recurring in their myriads according to the patterns of dependent origination, driven by the accumulated energy of karma, there appears another kind of being, pure and radiant, wherever the flux of *dharmas* affords the basis for sentient existence. Every *pudgala*, whether human

or animal, demonic or divine, thus opens a window as it were into another realm, through which, dimly or brightly, an infinite happiness shines into the world. And in the person of the Buddha, the window is opened wide and the nature of Nirvana is made known. The world may thus be thought of as a land of violence and darkness in which fires are burning, some fast and hot, some slow and insidious, some raging in a fierce turmoil of flames and smoke, some smouldering relentlessly with meagre light, and a few of them burning with a quiet and steady flame; and of these, occasionally there will be one that blazes up into the clear, still brilliance of a Tathāgata, in the vicinity of whose light many other fires begin to burn more clearly, until at last in the supreme intensity of their brilliance they vanish one by one from the dark night of Samsara.

Abbreviations

A	*Aṅguttaranikāya*
AAS	Anuruddha, *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*
AK	Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośa*
AKB	Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*
AS	Buddhaghosa, *Atthasālinī*
AV	*Atharva Veda*
BCAP	Prajñākaramati, *Bodhicaryāvatāra-pañjikā*
BU	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*
CU	*Chāndogya-upaniṣad*
CV	*Cullavagga*
D	*Dīghanikāya*
DC	*Debates Commentary*
DP	*Dhammapada*
DS	Dwarikadas Shastri
J	*Jātaka*
KU	*Kaṭha-upaniṣad*
KV	*Kathāvatthu*
KVA	*Kathāvatthuppakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā*
M	*Majjhimanikāya*
MA	*Majjhimanikāya-atthakathā*
MMK	Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*
MoV	Kassapa, *Mohavicchedanī*
MP	*Milindapañha*
MV	*Mahāvagga*
MVas	*Mahāvastu*
MZZ	*Manji zoku zōkyō*
NP	*Nettippakaraṇa*
P	Tibetan Tripiṭaka, Peking edition
PC	*Points of Controversy*
PPA	*Puggalapaññatti-atthakathā*
PPMV	Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā madhyamakavṛtti*
S	*Saṃyuttanikāya*
SN	*Suttanipāta*

SNA	*Suttanipāta-atthakathā*
ŚU	*Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad*
T	Chinese Tripiṭaka, Taishō edition
TS	Śāntarakṣita, *Tattvasaṃgraha*
U	*Udāna*
VM	Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga*
VV	Nāgārjuna, *Vigrahavyāvartanī*
YZLS	Kuījī (窺基), *Yìbù zōnglún lùn shùjì* (異部宗輪論述記)

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